



**Exploring professional development
at the Institute of Public Administration
in Saudi Arabia**

**Submitted by Khalid Atealah Althigafi to the University of Exeter
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ABSTRACT

This study explores professional development experiences, thoughts, concerns and needs of faculty staff members and leaders from the Institute of Public Administration (IPA). It also explores staff members' and leaders' views regarding the provision of professional development, as well as uncovers their perspectives regarding the least and most effective models and approaches toward professional development.

Leaders' perceptions regarding their roles in supporting professional development among faculty staff members are also investigated. An exploratory design methodology was used to utilise three data collection methods: (i) surveys; (ii) semi-structured interviews; and (iii) focus groups.

The overall data shows a match between the perceptions of faculty staff members and leaders regarding the provision for professional development. Throughout the three datasets, it was clear that professional development opportunities currently being offered do not meet the needs of staff members and leaders. Most participants reported that they only want to discuss their professional development needs. The data revealed that the centralised and top-down approach of the professional development system is negatively impacting IPA faculty staff members' and leaders' professional development experiences.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BERA	British Educational Research Association (BERA)
ELC	English Language Centre (ELC)x
HRD	Human Resource Development (HRD)
IPA	Institute of Public Administration (IPA)
PLN	Personal Learning Network (PLN)
SDL	Saudi Digital Library (SDL)

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

In an era of globalization, modern technology and social media networks, it has become essential for professionals in all fields to remain updated and connected to new issues and trends in their areas of specialties and majors. It has become increasingly difficult and challenging these days to remain up-to-date with the fast-growing changes and demands for personal and institutional improvement and reform. Building an effective professional development system seems to be crucial to help ministries, educational institutions, schools and other private and government bodies to adapt and keep up with the fast growing, challenging world. This has also resulted in a need to understand, not only professional development needs, but also the context of professional development in order to produce more relevant initiatives and decisions to support the implementation of innovative reforms and advancements (Svenden, 2020; Kelchtermans, 2004; Whitcomb, Borko, & Liston, 2009). In this thesis, I focus on the context of Saudi Arabia. Further details about the context and setting of this thesis are discussed in Chapter 2.

Over the last 15 years, a rapidly growing body of research on professional development in Saudi Arabia has eventuated. Most of the research and studies have been conducted on public schools and universities, and some on public health settings, such as hospitals and care centres (Tumulty, 2001; Alghamdi, 2011; Alharbi, 2011; Mansor, EL-Deghaidy, Alshamrani, & Aldahmash, 2014; Al Asmari, 2016; Sabah, Fayez, Alshamrani, & Mansour, 2014; Sywelem & Witte, 2013; Alshehri, 2018; and others). This expansion of research is the result of the Saudi government's scholarship program, which is now entitled *The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques Overseas Scholarship Program*, previously referred to as the *King Abdullah*

Overseas Scholarship Program. Many government employees, officials and university professors were exposed to new and different research areas, which created a new and fast-growing body of research. For more information, visit the Saudi Ministry of Education Website on the following link:
<https://www.moe.gov.sa/en/default.aspx>.

The main aim of this thesis is to explore and examine the perceptions and experiences of Institute of Public Administration (IPA) faculty staff members and their leaders regarding the provision for professional development. The IPA is the main national professional development training provider in Saudi Arabia for most ministries and government bodies. Another purpose of this study is to uncover the perspectives of IPA faculty staff members and their leaders regarding the least/most effective and preferred professional development models and approaches. Additionally, this thesis explores leaders' perceptions regarding their roles in supporting professional development among their faculty staff members.

In the following sections, a rationale for conducting the present study is presented, followed by a discussion about the significance of this study and the main aims and research questions of the study. Finally, a brief description of the overall thesis structure is presented.

1.1 Rationale for the study

This study is mainly influenced by my sense of failure in supporting my faculty staff members' professional development when I used to work as the manager of the English Language Centre (ELC) at the IPA. My main concern as a leader was to meet deadlines and to maintain a good reputation as a manager. I do not remember if I had ever thought about my staff members' professional development needs or

concerns. I believe I was nominated to be a leader of my colleagues to fulfil the demands and vision of top management. I can say that I have never been contacted by my superiors, top management or Human Resource Development (HRD) management regarding my staff members' professional development needs, issues or concerns. Further details about the IPA professional development system is provided in Chapter 2.

This sense of failure was triggered after undertaking a training module on professionalism as part of my doctorate program in education at the University of Exeter. After I completed the module, a spark ignited that started this whole journey of my research project. It was an eye-opening course for a very important research area that I did not know about. The various reading material I had to complete for the module enlightened my vision towards other aspects associated with the field of professionalism, such as professional culture and professional development. Additionally, as part of this module, I was given the opportunity to conduct a small study on professional development. This study has paved the way for me to embark on a large-scale study to explore professional development at the IPA.

This thesis was also enlightened by piloting the survey questions and discussing the study's aims with my colleagues at the IPA and fellow researchers at the university. It allowed me to view the perspectives of others besides my own reflections and insights into professional development experiences at the IPA. Prior to collecting data for the study, I took the opportunity to discuss the aims of the study with my friends at the University of Exeter. After arriving in Saudi Arabia, I piloted the survey questions and discussed the research project with colleagues at the IPA. All this activity ignited an interest in exploring the political system and understanding other contextual factors that might impact the participants' experiences of

professional development, which I hope is going to result in a broader understanding and vision of the professional development system at the main national professional development provider in the country.

1.2 Significance of the study

A plethora of research and studies has examined and investigated professional development from different corners and angles in many global contexts. This shows that it is necessary to understand the nature of professional development to help create further opportunities for advancement and reform. The main significance of this study emanates from the fact that there are almost no studies that have explored or investigated professional development at the IPA, the main national professional development provider in Saudi Arabia. More details about the context and setting of the study will be provided in Chapter 2. To my knowledge, this is the first study that attempts to explore and investigate professional development at the IPA.

Additionally, this study gains its significance from providing empirical data about the context of Saudi Arabia and the nature of the professional development system relevant to other local settings in the country.

This study will add to the body of knowledge by exploring and investigating the views and perceptions of a major professional development provider in Saudi Arabia. It will offer a platform for participants to express their thoughts and concerns, and provide an opportunity for IPA faculty staff members and their leaders to reflect on their experiences of professional development. Listening to staff members and leaders of a major professional development provider in the country is crucial for future improvement and reform (<https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en>). Exploring and investigating IPA leaders' and their staff members' views and perceptions regarding

the provision for their own professional development is one of the major contributions of this study. The findings of this study will contribute to policies of supporting professional development at the IPA, and more broadly to policies of supporting professional development on a national level.

This study also aims to provide top management, HRD management and policymakers at the IPA with ideas and suggestions for change and reform to help support professional development. In addition, it will open a window to take a glimpse at the nature of professional development in Saudi Arabia. This does not mean that all public settings are the same, but since the IPA is responsible for increasing the efficiency and productivity of public employees, this study could help to provide insight into the system of professional development in the country. Finally, I expect this study will support the achievement of the goals of national change and reform plans mentioned in *Saudi 2030 Vision* (<https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en>).

1.3 Study aims and questions

To understand or improve the professional development system, it is crucial to comprehend the recipients' perceptions regarding the provision of their own professional development (Sywalem & Witte, 2013). Professional development programs should be designed based on the actual needs of each recipient and his/her local context demands rather than a 'one-size fits all' system (Hargreaves, 2003). Therefore, the main study aims are as follows:

1. To explore and understand IPA faculty staff members' and leaders' experiences of professional development.
2. To explore and examine IPA faculty staff members' and leaders' perceptions regarding the least effective or most effective models or approaches of professional development.

3. To explore and investigate IPA leaders' perceptions toward their main role in supporting professional development among their staff members.

Based on an intensive review of the relevant body of literature, and based on my own experience in working for the IPA as a staff member and leader, as well as based on discussions with fellow researchers at the University of Exeter, this study contributes to the body of knowledge by addressing the following research questions:

Main questions

1. To what extent do staff members of the IPA consider their experiences of professional development to meet their needs?
2. What are their perceptions towards the least effective or most effective models of professional development?

Sub-questions

1. Are there any differences in the perceptions of IPA leaders, as opposed to staff members, regarding the provision for professional development?
2. What are IPA leaders' perceptions of their roles in supporting professional development among their staff members?

1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter presents a general overview of the study rationale, aims and questions. In Chapter 2, details about the study context and setting are presented and explained. Chapter 3 provides an overview of the relevant literature on professionalism, professional learning and development, and professional development models and approaches. Chapter 4 explains the design of the study and presents justification for choosing the adopted research paradigm and proposed methods, as well as selecting the data collection methodology. At the same time, a discussion of data analysis procedures and data

quality measures is presented. In addition, research ethics and issues of credibility and trustworthiness will be discussed. The findings of the study are presented in Chapter 5, followed by a discussion of the findings in Chapter 6. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the thesis with a summary of the main findings and a brief discussion of their implications, followed by an outline of the study's limitations and suggestions for further research and studies.

CHAPTER 2 – CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the contextual background of this study to help understand the professional development experiences of its participants. The first section of this chapter provides an overview of Saudi Arabia where this study was conducted, to generally explain its political system and geographical location. Outlining the political system will assist in understanding how it can affect broader decisions regarding professional development at the IPA and possibly at other higher education institutions in the country. A detailed description of the IPA where this study was carried out is also presented, followed by an explanation on IPA faculty staff members' professional development to enable an understanding of their initial education and the nature of currently available professional development opportunities. In the last section of this chapter, the literature of professional development in Saudi Arabia is presented and briefly discussed to draw a wider picture of the research context and setting.

2.2 The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is located in the south-west of Asia within the Arabian Peninsula. It is the largest state in western Asia, and the second largest state in the Middle East after Algeria, which is located in Africa. The country was founded in 1932 by King Abdulaziz Bin Saud; it currently stretches over a land mass of approximately 2,250,000 square kilometres, making it the largest country in the Arabian Peninsula. As shown in Figure 2.1, the country has 13 provinces. According to Saudi General Authority of Statistics, the total population of Saudi Arabia is 34.2 million with nearly

50% of its population under the age of 25 years old. The main official language is Arabic.



Figure 2.1 Map of Saudi Arabia

The Saudi political system is administered by a monarchy where the King is both the head of the state and government. Most senior crucial decisions come from the Council of Ministries, which is led by the King who is also the Prime Minister, sometimes in consultation with the Consultative Assembly (Shura Council). The Council of Ministries consists of the Prime Minister and Crown Prince, who is the Deputy Prime Minister, and cabinet ministers. The Crown Prince is also the Vice President of the Council of Ministers. All members of the Council are appointed by a royal decree from the King. The IPA Director General is also appointed by a royal decree.

According to the Saudi Embassy in Washington DC, the Council of Ministries is responsible for “drafting and overseeing the implementation of the internal, external, financial, economic, educational and defence policies, and general affairs of the state” (saudiembassy.net/ministries.com). Currently, there are 23 cabinet ministers and seven ministers of state with special responsibilities. The Consultative Assembly is the advisory board; it has 150 members who are appointed by a royal decree. The Consultative Assembly is similar to many parliamentary councils in many countries around the world. Prior to concluding this section, it is worth mentioning that most high-ranking positions in the country, such as university general directors and city mayors, are appointed by a royal decree from the King. In the following section, a detailed description of the IPA is provided to help understand the research setting.

2.3 Institute of Public Administration (IPA)

The IPA was established as an autonomous body corporate government agency on 10 April 1961 by Royal Decree No. 93 to increase the efficiency and productivity of public employees, as well as to support the foundation of national economic development (www.ipa.edu.sa). According to Article 2, which was approved by the Royal Decree No. M/49, the IPA “may provide training, consultation and research services in addition to other academic services to non-government bodies and, in some cases, to government bodies for a financial compensation”. The IPA also offers consultation on administrative affairs and issues that are referred to them by ministries and other government bodies and agencies. The IPA’s main activities fall into, but are not limited to, six main categories:

1. Providing in-service and pre-service training.
2. Providing administrative consultation to ministries and other government bodies and agencies.
3. Promoting and supporting management and administrative research.
4. Supplying administrative documentation.
5. Offering linguistic and translation services.
6. Providing IT and cyber security services and consultations.

According to Article 5, which was approved by Royal Decree No. M/49, the IPA Board of Directors is the supreme authority that oversees the IPA's affairs and manages its business. It is formed by the management structure shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 IPA management structure

Minister of Civil Service	Chairman
IPA Director General	Member
Representative from the Ministry of Finance	Member
Representative from the Ministry of Civil Service	Member
Representative from the Ministry of Education	Member
Representative from the Ministry of Labor and Social Development	Member
Three experienced and specialized "members" from the private sector, universities or professional institutes in the Kingdom or abroad shall be appointed by a resolution of the Council of Ministers upon proposal submitted by the Chairman of the Board.	

However, the Chairman usually authorises the IPA Director General to handle all IPA internal affairs and issues, Figure 2.2 shows the organizational structure of the IPA (adopted from the IPA website (www.ipa.edu.sa)).

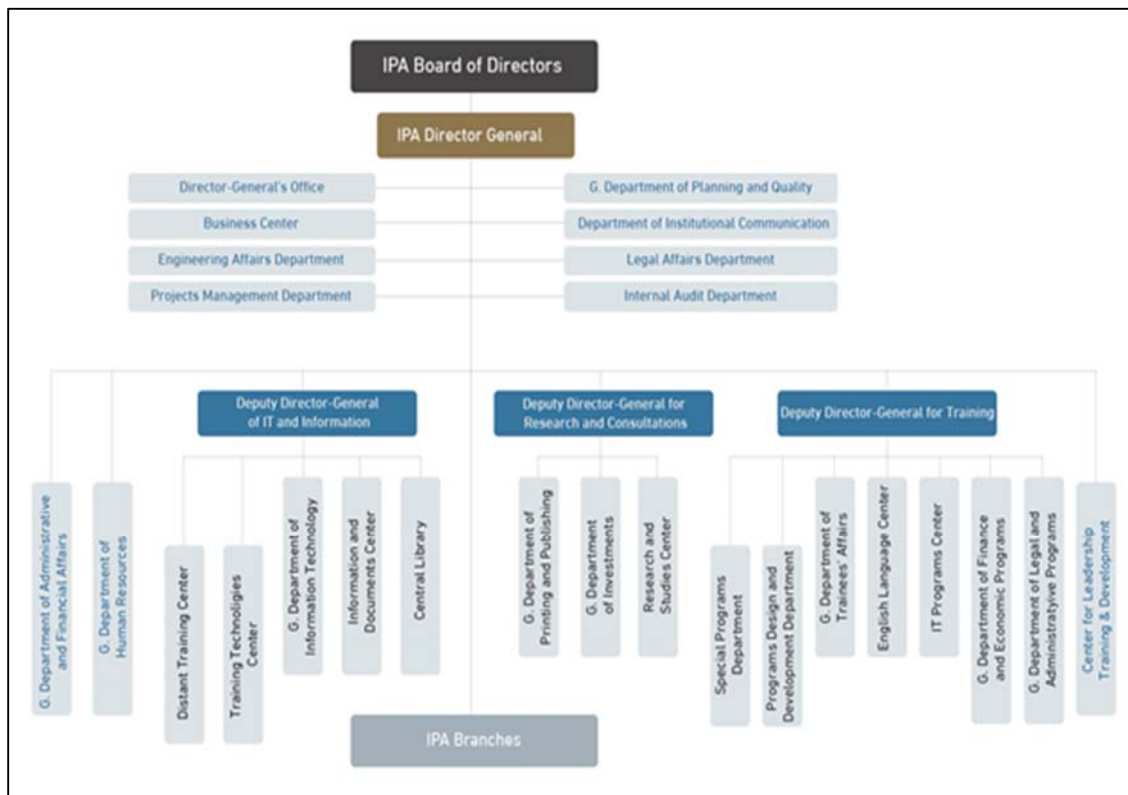


Figure 2.2 IPA organisational structure

The IPA is one of the most influential government institutions in Saudi Arabia, being the regulator and supervisor of most professional development training programs in the country. Currently, the IPA is working on building an innovative national framework for professional training and development in Saudi Arabia based on *Saudi 2030 Vision* (<https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/en>), which was launched in 2016, which will include improving and making new policies for training at the national level. However, it is worth noting that the term 'professional development' seems to be absent from the IPA's main agenda and stated regulations, although it is one of their major activities. Based on the IPA website, the IPA is mostly responsible for carrying out training for public employees without mentioning the term 'professional development' and supporting or endorsing research in professional development. Therefore, it might be useful to explore and understand IPA faculty staff members'

views and thoughts regarding professional development as they are responsible for supporting public employees' professional development.

The IPA offers training programs and consultations in various fields and majors, such as public administration, office management, accounting, information science, information technology, law, banking, statistics, health management, hospital administration, economy, human resources, business administration, organizational behaviour, linguistics and translation. In addition, the Academy for Developing Administrative Leaders offers leadership training programs for middle and senior high ranking public leaders, such as deputy ministers, assistant deputy ministers, general directors and military officials (www.ipa.edu.sa). There are also several centres within the IPA that offer different types of services, such as Business Centre, IT Programs Centre, Distance Training Centre, Information and Documentation Centre, Training Technologies Centre, Research and Studies Centre (<https://www.ipa.edu.sa/en-us/Centers/Pages/default.aspx>).

Furthermore, the IPA offers preparatory programs for high school graduates. These are two-and-a-half diploma programs designed on the demands of government and private sector needs. Academic majors and subjects change from time to time according to the demand for jobs in the country. Enrolled students start the program by studying the intensive English language program for one year, followed by their academic major for one-and-a-half years in the English language. Additionally, government officials and public employees interested in pursuing their postgraduate studies are also obligated to study and pass the English language intensive program at the IPA prior to leaving the country. The ELC is also responsible for providing English language training for specific purposes programs and courses for public employees who need a good mastery of general English and in majors,

such as accounting, law, business, management, economy, military studies, translation and hospital administration.

2.4 IPA faculty staff members' professional development

It is important to understand how the IPA employs faculty staff members. Initially, the IPA announces new vacancies and job positions on its website, after which a number of eligible candidates are contacted based on their university GPA. A committee appointed by the IPA Director General will conduct interviews with all chosen candidates. Successful applicants are hired based on a consensus decision by the committee members; they are informed that they have been chosen for the position. After that, the newly appointed faculty staff member is placed under close scrutiny to ensure his/her efficiency. Throughout their first year, new staff members work in various positions for different departments and sectors based on their field of study and major, except for newly hired English language staff members who start teaching and training from their first day of the job without any preparation or undertaking an induction program.

After one year, all newly appointed staff members must pass the intensive English language program before they can leave the country to pursue their master's degree. This does not apply for newly hired English language staff members who can leave for their master's degree study once they provide an admission letter from a recognized university that is a 'Top 200 University' according to the Academic Ranking of World Universities (<http://www.shanghairanking.com/ARWU2020.html>). This also applies for other faculty staff members once they finish their intensive English language program. If they fail the intensive English language program, they will be assigned as administrative staff, and will no longer be eligible to be a faculty or

academic staff member. All faculty staff members need to obtain a master's degree before they can teach their first class.

After completing their degree successfully, faculty staff members are required to attend the Train New Trainers program before embarking on their first training session or class. Most IPA faculty staff members have undertaken this program at the IPA where they were taught how to conduct a successful training session and how to give an effective presentation by chosen experienced staff members. In 2013, the Management of Planning and Development placed new graduates in a Train New Trainers program at their local overseas context before returning to Saudi Arabia and after completing their Master's degree. Then, it was cancelled and reinstated to be conducted at the IPA and presented by selected experienced faculty staff members.

After completing the Train New Trainers program, all freshly graduated staff members become eligible for a professional development training program two years after graduation of their master's degree at which time staff members become eligible for the annual summer training program. The IPA professional development program is basically based on sending faculty staff members to professional development training programs abroad every year during the summer vacation. These programs were previously selected by the Management of Planning and Development, but currently they are the responsibility of HRD management to meet IPA's top management agendas, objectives and needs. HRD management rarely contact different sectors of managers/leaders or permanent committees to discuss their faculty staff members' professional development needs. At the IPA, there are permanent committees for each sector and department that are normally chaired by the Center's directors and sectors heads to discuss matters and issues related to new changes and development.

IPA faculty staff members are given the option to be sent abroad every year to receive professional development training. It means that they are not obliged to attend the annual training program. However, it could be realised that this is the only available opportunity for them to support their professional development. HRD management provides leaders and their staff members with a list of overseas training programs which they must choose from. Leaders and their staff members can choose a maximum 10 days of training with maximum funding of US\$2,500. They can also choose to attend a conference or present a conference paper if desired. However, there is little encouragement or support for conferences; HRD management prefer leaders and staff to undertake training programs.

It is important to mention that all available training programs are proposed by HRD management and IPA top management. Staff members play no role in choosing their preferred or desired professional development training program. As a staff member, one can select a program from those listed on the IPA system, however, approval must be gained from the direct manager. These lists are categorised based on the different majors based on training programs for each major and subject area. This process occurs quickly because the lists only becomes available around two weeks prior to the summer vacation. It is also significant to note that there are no locally based training programs, or any other type of program conducted in Saudi Arabia; they are all conducted abroad. Finally, it is equally important to mention that there are no professional development initiatives promoted at the IPA except those offered by HRD management and top management. The following section explains how studies and research in professional development are conducted in Saudi Arabia.

2.5 Professional development in Saudi Arabia

During the last 15 years, a rapid growing trend towards research in professional development at different settings in the context of Saudi Arabia has emanated (Tumulty, 2001; Alghamdi, 2011; Alharbi, 2011; Mansor, EL-Deghaidy, Alshamrani, & Aldahmash, 2014; Al Asmari, 2016; Sabah, Fayez, Alshamrani, & Mansour, 2014; Sywelem & Witte, 2013; Alshehri, 2018; and others). Most of the research is conducted in public schools and universities, and some in the public health setting. This expansion of research is a result of the government scholarship program which is now called The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques' Overseas Scholarship Program, previously known as King Abdullah Overseas Scholarship Program. Many government officials and university professors were exposed to new and different research areas which has created an innovative, fast-growing body of research. For further information, visit the Saudi Ministry of Education website on <https://www.moe.gov.sa/en/default.aspx>.

Most conducted research and studies in Saudi Arabia have echoed that professional development training is mostly based on imposed training programs by a central authority, such as ministries and top managements (Sabah et al., 2014; Sywalem & Witte, 2013; Alshehry, 2018). Additionally, the majority of Saudi researchers agree that the top-down and centralised approach of professional development in Saudi Arabia is negatively impacting the recipient's experiences. Most of the reported findings echoed that professional development programs in Saudi Arabia are tailored, based on the demands and desires of a central authority, to achieve the objectives that were set by superiors and top management without involving those who are responsible for achieving the goals (Alharbi, 2011).

Other researchers highlighted that most participants in their studies did not believe that professional development programs met their needs; most stressed the need to involve them in the decision-making process regarding of their professional development (Mansour et al., 2014; Alghamdi, 2011; Al Asmari, 2016). It gives the impression that most professional development programs in Saudi Arabia are concerned with what can be done for employees, based on a top-down approach that neglects employees, teachers or staff members as sources for recognising their own professional development needs (Sabah et al., 2014). This was also observed by Swelem and Wittee (2013) when they reported that the majority of teachers in their study were not involved in determining or making key decisions about their own professional development needs. To sum up, Saudi Arabia's main objective for professional development is to train or directly instruct and teach employees, teachers or staff members to become more effective, as well as to increase efficacy and productivity. Most professional development training programs are imposed from above, and do not consider the recipient's opinions, thoughts and concerns, or to involve them regarding decision-making on how to support their own professional growth and development.

2.6 Summary

To summarise this chapter, I present the broader contextual background of this study, as well as provide an overview of the political system in Saudi Arabia and its geographical location. The nature of the political system is outlined to help understand how it might affect broader decisions regarding IPA leaders and their staff members' professional development. Furthermore, I provide a detailed description of IPA faculty staff members' initial education and professional development journey.

Finally, previous relevant studies and research on professional development in Saudi Arabia is discussed to broaden the understanding of this study context and setting. In the following sections, I present the relevant literature review to shed more light on other global studies and research on professional development that will support the findings of this study.

CHAPTER 3 – LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review and discuss the literature related to professionalism, professional development, professional development models and approaches, teacher professional development, leadership and their association with exploratory purposes of this thesis. By presenting and reviewing those concepts, the underpinning theoretical perspectives and justification for embarking on this research are explored, and to explain the key concepts and terminologies used in this thesis. The literature review follows inductive procedures for its exploratory accounts. Little research has been documented about the target population of this study. Therefore, this thesis seeks to explore and understand the participants' perceptions and experiences to draw a new picture from their viewpoints (Creswell, 1994).

This literature review is a traditional (narrative) and conceptual review. According to research-methodology.net, a narrative literature review examines and scans the body of a relevant body of literature. It summarises the body of literature with relevant research and studies that are connected to the research topic. This type of review facilitates researchers in identifying gaps in the topic of study. According to Cronin (2008), "Its primary purpose is to provide the reader with a comprehensive background for understanding current knowledge and highlighting the significance of new research" (p. 38). It also assists in developing research conceptual or theoretical frameworks (Coughlan et al., 2007).

According to Jesson et al. (2011), there are five types of a typical literature review: (i) conceptual review helps to maximise the understanding of the topic or issue of research; (ii) state-of-the-art review; (iii) expert review; (iii) scoping review;

and (v) traditional review helps to identify the contribution and importance of the research.

Grant, et al. (2009), stated his view on the conceptual review:

... groups articles according to concepts, or categories, or themes. It identifies the current 'understanding' of the given research topic, discusses how this understanding was reached, and attempts to determine whether a greater understanding can be suggested. It provides a snapshot of where things are with this particular field of research. (Western Libraries website)

That being said, this literature review discusses and reflects on research that has been conducted on professionalism, predominantly professional development, professional development models and approaches, to show how professionalism has paved the way for exploring gaps and building the conceptual and theoretical framework for this study. Therefore, research in the field of professional development and its concepts have been categorised and listed below to serve as the main aims of the study and to support its argument.

When looking for sources to support the argument regarding new and relevant literature in this research, the following search terms were used: professionalism, culture of professionalism, professional development, professional development models, professional development approaches, teachers professional development, professional skills development, leadership and professional development, using the internet for professional development, social media and professional development, staff development; using Google Scholar, Web of Science Master Journal List, University of Exeter Library, and other Saudi databases, such as Saudi Digital Library (SDL).

3.2 Professionalism and the culture professionalism

Based on the main aims and research questions, I started by explaining the notion of professionalism and the culture of professionalism to capture the participants' perceptions of their professional development experiences and needs. In this thesis, the concept of professionalism is introduced and presented to facilitate the understanding of the term, 'professional development', and as a means to introduce the complexity of professional development as a concept, what it means, and its importance for understanding the participants' experiences.

First, the notion of professionalism has been developed over time, as identified by Evetts (2012) through his three phases for the history of the concept of professionalism.

1. ***Professionalism as an occupational or normative value:*** Occupational values that are worth preserving and promoting are characterised by a strong sense of purpose in work and guided by valuable contributions to society, and inner dedication. Professionalism is also characterised by trust and confidence within professional relations among employers, their colleagues and their clients. It is also about the shared identity through collegial practice, and autonomous decision making. This can be seen and reflected in the context of this thesis. IPA occupational or normative values are presented and introduced to new employees on their first day of the job as 'IPA culture'.
2. ***A critical phase when professionalism was regarded as ideological and promoted in the interest of professional practitioners:*** For instance, Ozga (1995) viewed professionalism as "a way of controlling teachers" (p. 35). Also, Helsby (1999) reported that the concept of professionalism is "constantly

changing and constantly being redefined in different ways and at different times to serve different interests” (p. 35).

In addition, Evans (2008) stated that professionalism “may be interpreted as what is effectively a representation of a service level agreement imposed from above” (p. 4). This could be true because many standards and beliefs of professionalism and professional development are promoted and sometimes imposed from above, such as higher administrations, top management, governments and local political agendas.

- 3. *The third phase combines the ideological critique and normative value interpretations of professionalism:*** At this phase, professionalism, the culture of professionalism, and professional development mean different things to different people, and it is best understood in context which is the core of this thesis (Fox, 1992; Ozga, 1995). Furthermore, Troman (1996) identified the concept of professionalism as socially constructed, different from context to context. Therefore, to fully understand professional development and the culture of professionalism, it is necessary to identify how people within a particular context perceive professional development and their views on professional development opportunities offered to them. At the same time, people are to be given the opportunity to express their viewpoints in that particular context.

This section provides the reader with additional information about the concept of professionalism and how it has developed over time and under different situations. These changes provide insight into how professional development can be influenced by how professionalism is perceived and understood. Therefore, the analysis by

Evetts (2012) on how the notion of professionalism might have changed overtime and possibly under different circumstances has to be considered. Evetts proposed that professionalism and professional development can mean different things to different people and so must be understood in context. Many professional development programs and initiatives are influenced by how professionalism is perceived by organizations and what the employers expect of their employees.

Many texts have explained the concept of professionalism by linking it to particular professions; this is one of the main issues that have hindered reaching common ground on the concept of professionalism, and professional development as illustrated below. For instance, Helsby (1995) associated teacher professionalism with socially constructed standards:

If the notion of professionalism is socially constructed, then teachers are potentially key players in that construction, accepting or resisting external control and asserting or denying their autonomy. (Helsby 1995, p. 320)

Thus, professionalism could be perceived as the attitudes and behaviours an individual holds toward his/her occupation (Boyt, Lusch, & Naylor, 2001).

Other researchers, such as Hoyle (2001) and Sockett (1996) viewed professionalism as a way to enhance and maintain the quality of practice. It means that the culture of professionalism is promoted to improve and monitor practice. Furthermore, Evans (2008) reported that a major part of professionalism is linked to the professional culture, and what is considered a professional practice in a particular context. Evans (2008) explained professional culture as “ideologies, values and general ways of and attitudes to working” (p. 6). Thus, professionalism also could be defined as ‘commonality within a particular context’. Therefore, this thesis attempts to

provide some insight into the IPA's culture of professionalism to understand professional development experiences and needs of IPA faculty members.

A number of texts in the body of literature have associated the concept of professionalism with external factors that shape up professions in a particular context (Evans (2008); Evetts (2012); Ozga (1995); and others). At the same time, the concept is linked to the ongoing process of professional development (Evans, 2002). On that basis, it is crucial to consider IPA staff members' professional development experiences and needs to obtain a wider vision of professionalism and the culture of professionalism in their context, and to allow staff members to voice their opinions, and possibly provide opportunities for change, reform or improvement.

The concept of professionalism cannot be defined from the notion of professionalism. As indicated by Horn (2016), professionalism "describes a certain quality of practice and makes it possible to distinguish professionals working professionally from professionals not working professionally" (p. 137). This view relies on local common beliefs about professionalism and what it means to be a professional. It is worth mentioning that both words (professionalism and professionalism) mean the same thing in Arabic.

Additionally, as defined by Evans (2008):

Professionalism is a professionalism-influenced practice that is consistent with commonly-held consensual delineations of a specific profession and that both contributes to and reflects perceptions of the profession's purpose and status and the specific nature, range and levels of service provided by, and expertise prevalent within the profession, as well as the general ethical code underpinning this practice. (Evans, 2008, p. 13)

This view signifies the importance of examining the contextual perceptions of professionalism and professional development from both sides, that is, the organization and staff members.

Furthermore, Leung (2013) viewed professionalism as a set of ethical principles and knowledge related to specific work practices. It is about the known ethical standards within a culture or a community of practice and the specific knowledge associated with the different fields. From this last viewpoint, we can identify that professionalism, professionalism and professional development could mean different things to different people, majors, contexts and settings.

Following Evans and Horn, it is important to understand the culture of professionalism and what it means to be a professional, because the professional development system and vision are a combination of institutional and staff members' perceptions. Therefore, it is important to discuss some of the concepts that are associated with understanding professional development within a context.

Following are the concepts of professional development and teacher professional development that are considered in more detail to pave the way for further insight towards enriching the discussion of this thesis.

3.3 Towards a definition of professional development

The concept of professional development has several dimensions that involve the culture of professionalism, pre-service training and learning, professional knowledge, professional skills, continuous professional development, self-reflexivity, cultural values and beliefs, and much more. Studies and research that define professional development as a concept by itself are lacking in the literature. Most of the studies and research conducted on professional development are theoretical or

philosophical, while others are associated with particular professions and their needs, such as teaching and nursing.

According to Evans (2008):

Stipulative definitions both of teacher development and, more generally, of professional development, are difficult to find. Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) comment on 'how little systematic attention has been devoted to understanding the topic' (p. 1). Definitions of teacher development are almost entirely absent from the literature; even those who are generally considered leading writers in the field do not define precisely what they mean by the term. Darling-Hammond (1994), Leithwood (1992), Fullan and Hargreaves (1992) and Hargreaves and Fullan (1992), for example, all failed to offer operational definitions of teacher development or of professional development. (p. 30)

Kelchtermans (2004) defined professional development as:

... a learning process, resulting from the meaningful interaction between the teacher and their professional context, both in time and space. This interaction eventually leads to changes in a teacher's professional practice as well as their thinking about the practice. (p. 217)

This shows that it is crucial to consider the context in investigating professional development. Whitcomb, Borko and Liston (2009; as cited in Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2006) suggested for researchers in the field of professional development to involve different perspectives, and to view diverse perceptions that help to explore professional development within a particular context which lies at the core of this thesis.

Similar to other writers in the field, I consider that professional development is about systematic (formal) and non-systematic (informal) learning that helps to enhance professional knowledge and skills that will lead to changes in practice or attitudes toward a professional practice within a particular context. However, as

observed by some writers in the field, most definitions do not reflect the complexity embedded within the journey of a lifelong career professional development.

According to the Glossary of Education Reform:

In education, the term **professional development** may be used in reference to a wide variety of specialized training, formal education, or advanced professional learning intended to help administrators, teachers, and other educators improve their professional knowledge, competence, skill, and effectiveness. When the term is used in education contexts without qualification, specific examples, or additional explanation, however, it may be difficult to determine precisely what 'professional development' is referring to. (<https://www.edglossary.org/>)

From this definition, professional development involves a wide range of activities and opportunities. However, this definition neglects the consideration of informal and natural sides of professional development. According to Day (1999):

Professional development consists of all natural learning experiences and those conscious and planned activities which are intended to benefit the individual, group or school and which contribute, through these, to the quality of education in the classroom. (p. 4)

In this thesis, the focus is on formal and planned organizational efforts to promote professional development and create professional development opportunities. As explained in Chapter 1, a central focus of interest is on exploring and understanding the participants' experiences and reactions to currently offered professional development programs and opportunities. Another main interest is to explore their perceptions as to the least or most effective models or approaches of professional development. Unveiling these elements is one way in which the study seeks to build a richer and more complex understanding of professional development.

In the following section on the professional development of teachers, further insight is presented to enrich the discussion of this thesis. Since all research participants are teachers (faculty members), it might be useful to review the relevant literature.

3.4 Professional development of teachers

As cited in Evans (2002), several books have been published in the field of teacher professional development (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Day, 1999), yet none have provided a concise definition of *teacher professional development*. According to Evans, a clear definition was not offered, as much of the text have shed little evidence on the teacher's career. For instance, Keiny (1994) viewed professional development as "a process of professional growth" (p. 158). This professional growth occurs while working and is based on personal experiences, and possibly by the provision of professional development programs. This definition describes the process of development rather than the concept itself.

Evans (2002) also defined teacher professional development as "the process whereby teachers' professionalism and/or professionalism may be considered to be enhanced" (p. 131). It can be seen that Evans described teacher professional development as the process of improving or enhancing the teacher's professionalism or professionalism. As aforementioned, both words mean the same thing in Arabic. Thus, in my opinion, it is not applicable to generalise these concepts of professional development or teacher professional development.

Evans (2002, p. 131) identified two components of teacher professional development for all managers and leaders at the IPA who were originally either

faculty members or teachers (for further details, refer to the study context in Chapter 2).

1. *Attitudinal development*: “The process whereby teachers’ attitudes to their work are modified.” Again, this signals the need for exploring and examining the participants’ perceptions and attitudes towards their own professional development experiences.
2. *Functional development*: “The process whereby teachers’ professional development may be improved.” This also highlights another important aspect associated with the provision of professional development.

According to Evans (2002), the process of teacher professional development involves changing or reforming the attitudes of teachers toward their professions and practices, and at the same time, enhancing the performance of teachers. It also involves motivating teachers to a self-directed, self-driven form of professional development by encouraging teachers to become more critical, analytical and self-reflective of their career needs and goals.

It is also worth mentioning that Evans (2002) described teachers’ professional development as a motivational change, that is, when teachers become demotivated, and their performances change, however, when supported by management, it is not considered to be development. Evans described teachers’ development as not merely learning, but also a change in attitude and performance.

She also stated, “What the government, for example, may consider to be teachers’ development may be also conflict with parents’ or school governments’ views” (p. 132). Indeed, in any professional development program, the needs of all stake holders should be considered, explored and examined. At the IPA, professional

development programs are only guided and driven by the senior administration or top management; the government desires to enhance professional standards and to improve the quality of service.

To sum up, professional development or teacher professional development is a complex concept and not easy to define. As aforementioned, most definitions do not reflect the complexity embedded within the journey of a lifelong career involving professional development. Teacher professional development involves a wide range of ideas, activities, actions, processes, and much more, such as changing attitudes, improving performance, training, motivation, enhancing professionalism, learning, growth, interaction and reforming.

Svendsen (2020) conducted a review study on the literature of teacher professional development. She noted that most professional development initiatives are based on what we can do for teachers in a top-down approach. She further indicated that the question to be asked should be: What makes teacher professional development effective? She stated, that “successful teacher professional development efforts are made together with teachers instead of being designed as doing things to teachers” (p. 111). It is about teachers as active participants instead of passive learners, making decisions regarding their own development to make it “attractive and perceived as valuable” (Svendsen, 2020, p. 111).

Based on findings from her review study, Svendsen (2020) reported that researchers in the field of teacher professional development are encouraged to focus on the need of allocating more time and space for teachers to develop, as well as the necessity of involving them in the decision-making process regarding their professional development and practice to help reform and implement new changes

and to allow them to conduct more research and studies. Her conclusion concerns the expected changes as a result of teacher professional development:

...are not structural or linear, but rather a process that are built on the following:

1. Teacher professional development sustainability over time.
2. Modes of delivery.
3. Learning communities and collaboration.
4. Relations and trust when developing professionally.
5. Time and teacher professional development in schools. (p. 123).

However, it cannot be denied that a fundamental part of teachers' professional development is associated with teachers' willingness to develop and become more professional by exposing themselves to new trends and approaches, and becoming more active participants in their fields and majors through activities, such as reading online, using social media for networking with other professionals, attending conferences, reading and writing for academic journals.

From what is presented in this section and in Section 3.3, we could identify that professional development can be formal and explicit, that is, planned for and guided by a central authority, senior management or HRD Management Day (1999). It is about the planned organizational efforts to promote professional development and create professional development opportunities. On the other hand, professional development can also be perceived as an informal process if it is able to occur naturally as a result of interactions with the professional context implicitly without formal and intentionally planned efforts Kelchtermans (2004).

Therefore, in the following sections, the main traditional and contemporary models of professional development and professional skills progression across the

body of literature to grasp a wider view of the nature of the most common professional development models and practices around the world are outlined in detail, and linked to the context of this thesis.

3.5 Professional skills progression and development

An interesting argument and critique was made by Dall’Alba and Sandberg (2006) concerning Drefus and Drefus’ (1986) stage models of professional skills development whereby they revealed further insights into the concept of professional development across different professions.

While the majority of the extant research on professional development has focused on particular professions, Dall’Alba and Sandberg (2006) provided wider insights into the concept of professional development itself by critiquing the model of stage skills acquisition development which is based on the progression from one stage to another; it means acquiring detailed knowledge and skills of a profession separate from, or without, the context.

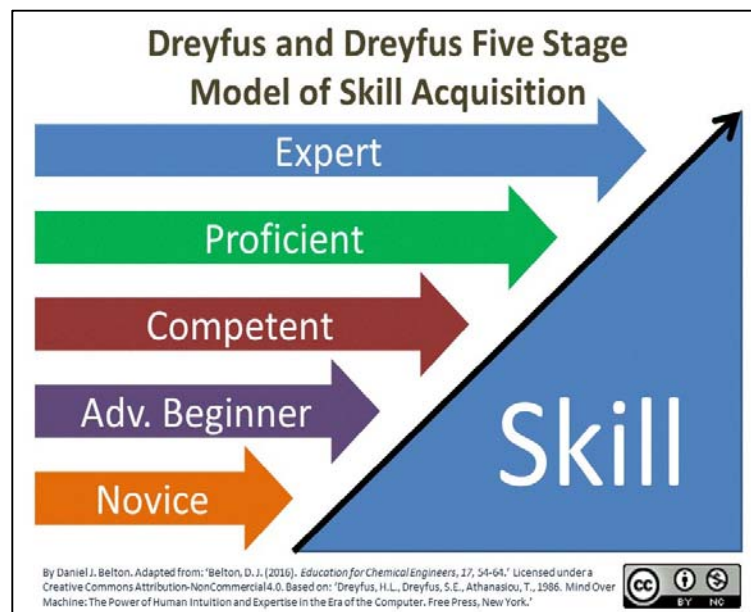


Figure 3.1 Dreyfus and Dreyfus five stage model of skill acquisition

Dall’Alba and Sandberg (2006) reviewed a wide range of theoretical and empirical research in professional development across different professions, mainly health and education (Billett, 2001; Borko et al., 1997). They also looked into several studies in the field of cognitive psychology on how people develop expert skills in professions such as teaching, music, law, and management (Berliner, 1994; Billett, 2001; Ericsson & Smith, 1991; Hoffman, 1992; Sternberg & Ben-Zeev, 2001; Sternberg et al., 2000). They stated that professional development “is not a fixed or static container but, rather a dynamic flow produced and reproduced by professionals” (p. 385). This signals the importance of involving professionals’ (participants) perceptions and perspectives when planning to improve, reform or change the practice, or to explore the provision of professional development in a particular context which is the core of this thesis.

According to Dall’Alba and Sandberg (2006), instead of introducing the culture of professionalism, rules and regulations to new professionals, it is more helpful to engage them in meetings with their experienced counterparts, putting more emphasis on the collaboration among peers. The authors proposed that this could result in a better understanding of the context, practice and their issues.

Dall’Alba and Sandberg (2006) emphasised the importance of collegial collaboration among professionals to facilitate better understanding of professions and their contexts. They reported that Dreyfus and Dreyfus’s (1986) stage model of professional development is important, but it is not enough to understand the context. Therefore, it is of greater importance to listen to IPA staff members and their leaders to form a better understanding of their context and the participants’ needs.

Dall'Alba and Sandberg's (2006) model of professional development is based on the understanding of practice and context, combined with professional skills progression. They suggested that further research is needed to explore the factors that may contribute to the growth of professional skills, and how those skills develop over time. Supportive leaders can play an important role in encouraging their staff members to develop their professional skills. In this thesis, perceptions of faculty members and leaders are examined to gain wider insights into participants' experiences and needs, as well as relevant contextual issues.

Figure 3.2 explains Dall'Alba and Sandberg's (2006) model for the development of professional skills.

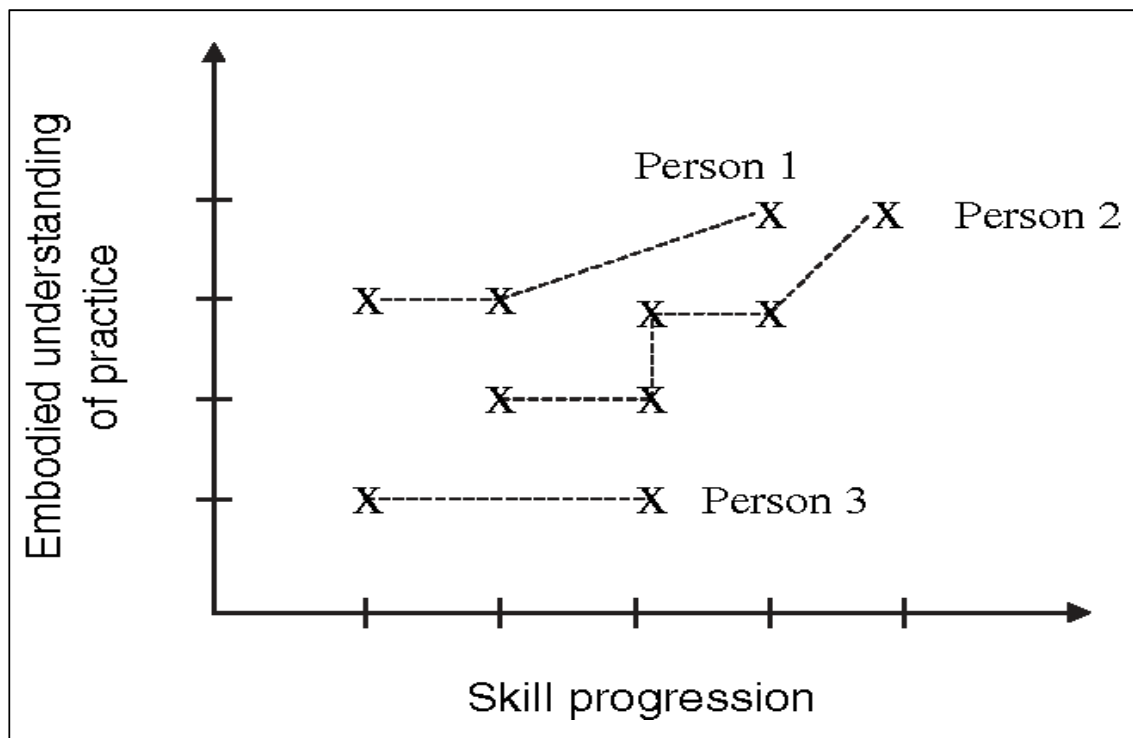


Figure 3.2 Model for the development of professional skills (Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2006)

They concluded that research on professional development without a core understanding of the professionals' perceptions of practice and context is incomplete.

According to them, “a central principle in all of these spheres is constant monitoring of participants’ understanding of, and in, practice as an input to the design and continual revision of programs and courses” (p. 402). They emphasised the need of analysing and examining professionals’ (participants) understanding of practice and context as a launching ground for improving, reforming or changing professional development practices or attitudes.

The second research question explores the participants’ perceptions regarding the least effective or most effective models and their approach towards professional development. To widen the discussion further on professional development, key professional development models across the literature are presented and discussed in the next section.

3.6 Professional development models

Professional development models and practices are based on different theoretical perspectives and approaches. For instance, more modern approaches believe that learners should participate in, and contribute to, their own personal growth and development. Other traditional models disregard learners and perceive them as passive participants who need to be trained and developed by more expert trainers or agencies. There is a plethora of studies that address particular models and approaches; however, it is not easy to find studies that categorises or group the models as a whole.

By identifying, presenting and discussing different professional development models and approaches, I attempt to draw connections and interrelate the literature that discusses professional development models, which may be helpful for the context of this thesis. This research explores the participants’ perceptions regarding

their professional development experiences and professional development models, apart from scanning other global views of professional development models, approaches and linking them to the context of this thesis.

In an article that has been cited 962 times in 2020, Kennedy's (2005) review study is one of the most popular in its field because it incorporated almost every professional development model for future research, analysis and investigation. This study presented and analysed nine different models of professional development, which are discussed, analysed and linked to the context of this thesis.

Kennedy's nine models of professional development are 'categorised by their sense of autonomy and purpose' (p. 248) (Figure 3.3).

Model of CPD	Purpose of model
The training model The award-bearing model The deficit model The cascade model	Transmission
The standards-based model The coaching/mentoring model The community of practice model	Transitional
The action research model The transformative model	Transformative

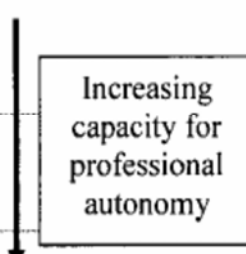


Figure 3.3 Nine models of professional development (Kennedy, 2005)

She suggested that these nine models were identified to provide further opportunities for research and analysis. In this thesis, with this article review set as the cornerstone, other studies and empirical research will be presented and discussed to provide further insight into Kennedy's models.

In 2014, Kennedy postulated that most research in the literature is focused on the impact of professional development looking at student results, which is a limited

viewpoint. She grouped professional development studies in the literature into five main sections (p. 690): (i) literature on context-specific initiative; (ii) literature on particular models of CPD; (iii) literature on characteristics of effective CPD; (iv) literature on the impact of CPD; and (v) literature on CPD policy.

3.6.1 *The training model*

The training model is the most commonly used model of professional development at the IPA and in Saudi Arabia. It is based on introducing new skills and knowledge. As illustrated in Chapter 2 (Context of the Study), training programs are thought to be presented by highly skilled agencies or personnel with disregard for context specific needs, which leaves participants to be placed in a passive position.

This model, however, could be an effective tool in presenting new knowledge or skills, therefore, it is a fundamental part of professional development. One of the main advantages of this model is that it can be scheduled and planned for without interrupting any work task or obligation (Butler, 1992). At the same time, it can be more effective if the needs are addressed carefully, and the participants are involved in the process of planning and preparing for this kind of professional development program.

Online training is another aspect of the training model that is discussed in greater details in the *Using the internet for professional development* section of this chapter. Abu-Tineh and Sadiq (2018) reported that online training could help in providing cheaper solutions for professional development, and saving money on travel, paper and other expenses. It could also help staff members to develop their technological skills. The two authors also reported that many teachers in the Gulf region (Saudi Arabia, Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman) prefer more traditional

approaches of professional development, such as traditional training courses or programs and conferences.

Abu-Tineh and Sadiq (2018) emphasised on other forms of more contemporary and 'reform' models of professional development, such as study groups, teacher networks, mentoring and coaching. They also proposed that these reform models could be different in terms of their flexibility in application, and their possibility to be reflected on for daily practice. At the same time, there is the potential to provide staff members with new skills to be applied by disregarding their previous knowledge and skills. In their study, providing professional development programs or training from more experienced staff members was considered the most highly effective form of professional development. However, as they finally concluded, these programs need to be followed by "workshops, training programs, study groups and peer observation" (p. 319).

3.6.2 *The award-bearing model*

This model is designed and controlled by award agencies, such as higher education institutions, universities, ministries of education and policymakers, all of which could be influenced by the local dominant discourse, such as the local culture of professionalism, political agendas and popular intellectual culture; thus reducing the sense of autonomy. It is based on the completion of a degree program or course.

In a review study, Kennedy (2014) updated her new 'Spectrum of CPD Models' (p. 693) (Figure 3.4).

Purpose of Model	Examples of models of CPD which may fit within this category
Transmissive	Training models Deficit models Cascade model
Malleable	Award-bearing models Standards-based models Coaching/mentoring models Community of practice models
Transformative	Collaborative professional inquiry models

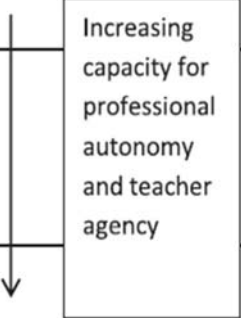


Figure 3.4 Spectrum of COD models (Kennedy, 2014)

The award-bearing model has been moved to a new category due to new trends, such as attaining master's degrees, postgraduate courses and diplomas where professionals gain extra autonomy and power, although possibly controlled and guided by educational bodies and the government.

As presented in Chapter 2, at the IPA, obtaining a masters' degree is compulsory for faculty members. There is insufficient space in this thesis to discuss further implications of this model, therefore, the focus will be on participants' professional development experiences and needs, as well as their perceptions of the least effective or most effective models and approaches of professional development.

3.6.3 The deficit model

In this model, staff members are perceived to experience limitations or deficits, that is, they need to be trained by highly qualified agencies or trainers. The deficit model is based on the idea of designing professional development programs to address particular issues or weaknesses in staff performance. Staff members are also

perceived as passive participants of the development process, which could create a negative impact on the objectives and outcomes of the institution as a whole, as well as on the culture of professionalism and professional development (Evetts, 2012).

From another perspective, Rhodes and Beneicke (2003) echoed that a teacher's performance is significantly influenced by his/her leader and management practices. Furthermore, Boreham (2004) also reported that staff members' performances are, to a large extent, influenced by leaders and managers, and by management practices that support the following:

1. Gathering all opinions and perspectives of the context or workplace which is the core of this thesis.
2. Working on building an updated knowledge through collaboration.
3. Promoting a sense of autonomy.

The IPA is constantly concerned about training and supporting professional development through foreign agencies, bodies or trainers, which they consider as highly professional and better qualified at focusing on knowledge and skills with disregard to the context and different individual professional development needs. Further discussion about leadership and professional development is presented in a separate section below.

3.6.4 *The cascade model*

This model is associated with limited budgets for selected staff members to attend training programs. After completing the training program, attendees are expected to deliver the course material to other colleagues or staff members in the institution. According to Kennedy (2005), the cascade model was employed in Scotland in the early 1990s when there was a lack of local and budgetary support. As she indicated

that the cascade model lacks the support of local values and context needs, it focuses on knowledge and skills with no regard for the context and its values and needs.

Because the financial budget is not a relevant issue in this research, the cascade model will not be discussed or explored further. Therefore, based on the discussion so far, it is more important to explore and examine the local perspectives and perceptions of professional development and their association with leaders and management practices.

3.6.5 *The standards-based model*

This model is based on creating a fixed system of teaching and teacher professional development by disregarding other unique elements, such as context-specific needs and issues. It is concerned with focusing on the competency of individual staff members and neglecting 'collaborative and collegiate learning' (Kennedy, 2005, p. 241).

In this model, imposing certain standards could backfire and possibly cause staff members to become reliant on professional development programs that are provided to them by their employers, resulting in reducing their sense of responsibility towards self-learning and development. However, supporters of this model have argued that it helps to create a common ground for staff members to discuss their professional practice and development. It could also help to guide professional development in certain desired directions, and possibly unify the objectives and vision, but it does limit the potential for exploring new or alternative horizons beyond the promoted standards.

At the context of this thesis, and similar to other higher education institutions in the country, the professional development system and its vision is based on professional standards promoted by senior administration or top management and committees that are influenced by the local culture of professionalism and sometimes guided by the government's vision and political agendas. The local professional development system is mostly built for quality assurance to promote certain professional actions.

3.6.6 The coaching/mentoring model

This model was designed to select one or more experienced staff members to work with newly hired staff or employees. It could also play a part in an induction program for new staff members. The coaching/mentoring model highlights the crucial role of leaders in selecting suitable contenders for this task, as indicated by Kennedy (2005):

While the new induction arrangements in Scotland require that each new teacher has a designated 'supporter', there are no requirements for that person to have particular strengths in terms of interpersonal communication or to be trained in the role of supporter. (p. 243)

The scope of this research is not enough to discuss this matter further, therefore, the focus will be on the role of leaders and leadership/management supporting professional development.

This model has the advantage of introducing skills, knowledge and promoting the desired culture of professionalism, as well as facilitates in providing consultation related to the local context, and supporting confidentiality, dialogue, collaboration, collegial learning and development. As echoed by Kennedy (2005), this model could possibly assist in introducing acceptable sociocultural and political norms within the

workplace or context. The model could also support transmission and transformative purposes of professional development.

3.6.7 The community of practice model

Learning within a community of practice can be extremely effective and progressive. It could widen the gaze of professionals by discussing and reflecting on their ideas and experiences. In this model, the depth of connection among professionals is a key element for creating opportunities for learning and development.

This model, however, could be influenced by a local dominant discourse and professional culture where a number of influencers within the community intentionally or unintentionally creates a wave that could manipulate the direction of the overall perception towards unwanted choices. At the same time, this model has great potential for creating the prospect for change, reform and development where members' ideas and knowledge are shared to enhance and reflect on the practice and the process of professional learning and development, as stated by Kennedy (2005):

It is argued that while communities of practice can potentially serve to perpetuate dominant discourses in an uncritical manner, under certain conditions they can also act as powerful sites for transformation, where the sum total of individual knowledge and experience is enhanced significantly through collective endeavour. (p. 245)

Furthermore, this type of learning and development needs a supportive environment. As echoed by Whitcomb, Borko and Liston (2009), to guarantee success in professional communities, it is important to create a healthy and positive environment that supports collaboration among professionals to encourage them to reflect on their own practices and experiences. This again highlights the importance of leaders and

their role to facilitate a supportive environment for staff members, that is, to be prepared to discuss any difficulty or challenge that reflects on their practice and professional development needs. At the context of this thesis, there is no formal or informal community of practice. Informal chats take place from time to time among close colleagues.

3.6.8 The action research model

As defined in the *Glossary of Education Reform*:

Action research is a wide variety of evaluative, investigative, and analytical research methods designed to diagnose problems or weaknesses – whether organizational, academic, or instructional- and help educators develop practical solutions to address them quickly and efficiently. (<https://www.edglossary.org/>).

This definition concentrates on the practical side of action research and how it can be employed. According to the *Harvard Business Review*:

The action research model is based on the theory of social learning which takes place between individuals within the same community who share the same interests or issues by discussing best practices and creating new knowledge informally. (<https://hbr.org/>)

Kennedy (2005) stated that “communities of practice will engage in action research” (p. 245). She further reported that supporters of an action research model suggest that there will be a wider influence on practice when action research is employed and shared among communities of practice. Action research will help to reduce the dependency on global research because it addresses the local contextual practice, issues and needs, and is conducted by the same members to tackle them. It increases professional autonomy, supports the transformative practice, promotes critical thinking and reflects the understanding of the participants.

In the context of this thesis, very few studies have discussed or investigated the effectiveness of this type of learning and development. At the IPA, there is a lack of connection between actual classroom practice and currently offered professional development opportunities and training programs. Therefore, it may be beneficial to utilise action research as an opportunity for professional learning and development.

3.6.9 *The transformative model*

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the *Towards a definition of professional development* section is one of the main objectives of any professional development program when making a change or improvement to a practice, and sometimes altering a perception. The transformative model is a combination of all models presented above that support a transformative aim besides raising awareness to issues of power. The transformative model is not a model by itself but rather a mixture of conditions that guide the transformation of practice or its intended reform.

It could be argued that the transformative model is not a clearly definable model in itself: rather it recognises the range of different conditions required for transformative practice. (Kennedy, 2005, p. 246)

Throughout discussions and dialogues among staff members, leaders, policymakers and other stakeholders, a transformative practice could be achieved. In this thesis, the perceptions and perspectives of IPA staff members and leaders toward their experiences of professional development are explored and examined, which hopefully pave the way for the basis of an innovative transformative professional development model.

3.7 Summary of professional development models

The scope of this thesis is inadequate to comprehensively cover and discuss all existing professional development models. In this section, I will describe how other studies have attempted to present and summarise professional development models in similar and different ways. For instance, Sparks and Louks-Horsely (1990; as cited in Butler, 1992, p. 6) presented five models of teacher professional development:

1. *Individually guided staff development*: This model allows staff to pursue and formulate their own activities that will support their professional learning and development, also termed, 'self-directed or self-driven professional development'.
2. *Observation and assessment*: Teachers are observed to receive information about their own practice in the classroom.
3. *Teachers' involvement in the professional development progress*: Teachers are involved in the process of making decisions, change, improve, or reform the professional development practice.
4. *Training*: Direct instructions are given to improve, reform or change teaching practices and learning outcomes.
5. *Inquiry/action research*: Teachers conduct experiments and research to collect and analyse data about their own practice.

In addition, Gaible and Burns (2005) presented three professional development models that could summarise all models stated in this literature review and mentioned across the body of literature:

1. *Standard professional development:* It relies on training-based approaches and passing knowledge and skills from a training agency or group of experts or trainers, either face-to-face or online by introducing new skills and knowledge.
2. *Site-based professional development:* It is based on addressing contextual issues and needs by allowing intensive reviews and research of local professional development programs and approaches, as well as providing greater opportunities for local researchers and organisations to explore and investigate local issues of professional development, which are the core aspects of this thesis.
3. *Self-directed professional development:* In self-directed professional development, staff members decide and plan for their own professional development to enhance their skills and knowledge in different ways. For example, seeking support from more experienced colleagues about a particular matter regarding their tasks and obligations, or reading and learning about their subjects and majors. In this type of professional learning, staff members create their own opportunities for professional development. According to Gaible et al. (2005), this model of professional development should be used to support the two models mentioned above, because it is more suited to staff members who are “motivated self-starters, and who have already developed teaching skills and subject mastery” (p. 23).

Furthermore, as stated on the United Nations Careers website (<https://careers.un.org/lbw/home.aspx?viewtype=cs>), staff should be responsible for seeking their own professional development opportunities; the important role of

leaders in supporting professional development is to guide and provide a supportive work environment for their staff.

Although you are primarily responsible for your professional and personal development, and are the key driver in your career planning process, managers are always there to provide you with the necessary direction, information as well as a work environment to positively and qualitatively support your career development. (United Nations Careers website)

This again signals the important role of leaders in guiding and supporting their staff's professional development. This point is further discussed in Section 3.10.

Another interesting review study of existing professional development models is based on the analysis of seven global professional development initiatives by Ferreira, Ryan and Tilbury (2007) who identified the following professional development models associated with their degree of impact and change on teachers' initial education towards a sustainable development (p. 228):

1. *Collaborative resource development and adaption model:* It is based on implementing change through training in pedagogy and curriculum from policymakers to provide new approaches to teaching and learning. Basically, the curriculum and pedagogical change will lead to a wider systematic change and reform.
2. *Action research model:* This model perceives teachers or staff members as researchers, developers, reformers, appliers of curriculum, and critics of policy; the action research model is missing in the context of this thesis.
3. *Whole-of-system model:* This model proposes the need to combine all previous models with the contextual and stakeholders needs for professional development objectives toward sustainability.

4. *New model:* It involves combining the best features of previously mentioned models; it proposes an approach that combines the action research model and whole-of-system model to impact broader changes within the educational system.

Prior to concluding this section, it is important to mention that there is no single theory or approach that defines specifically how adults learn, or in what ways they could improve their professional learning (Zemke, 1981; as cited in Butler, 1992, p. 2). It could be useful and beneficial to analyse the awareness of existing knowledge about the culture of professionalism, currently offered professional development programs, how recipients of those programs feel and think about them, besides understanding and analysing the context to meet its needs.

There is not one ultimate model or approach of professional development. As echoed by Whitcomb, Borko and Liston (2009), it is about building a professional development system based on interpretive enquiry of the context:

As a field, we have work ahead to solve challenges associated with constructing an effective system of professional development. We need to document through interpretive design studies other promising models, we need to find solutions for problems associated with scaling up promising models. (p. 212)

They suggested for researchers in the field of professional development to provide wider choices to involve diverse perspectives and to view different perceptions of professional development within the target context, which is the core of this thesis.

In the following sections, other approaches or models of professional development are described. The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the search for different options and approaches to keep operations running smoothly. Investing in

digital and IT infrastructures appears to be relatively important and essential. Online meeting platforms, online classes and online training courses have gained much interest, resulting in increased demand and popularity. Large companies, such as Microsoft and google are forcing workers and staff to work from home. Social media has now become the new ground for learning and development, and interacting with other professionals. Figure 3.5 shows the global increase of internet and social media users between July 2019 and July 2020 (<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-july-global-statshot>).

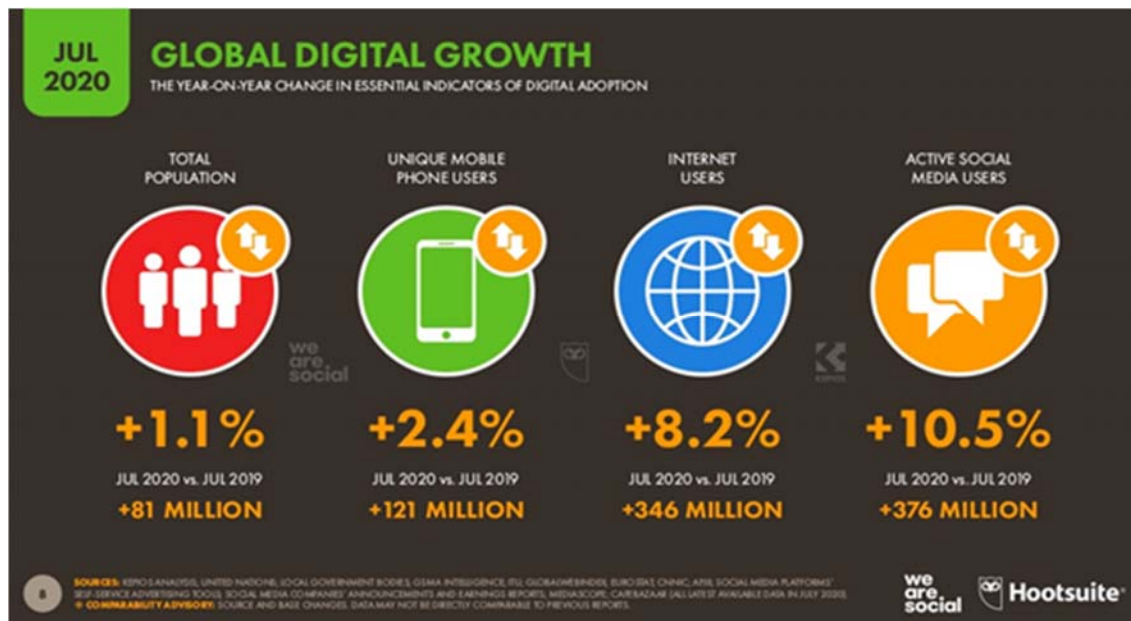


Figure 3.5 Global digital growth statistics (July 2019 to July 2020)

3.8 Using the internet for professional development

Some traditional models of professional development are time-consuming and not cost-effective, and in most cases, they require face-to-face interaction. The internet could provide an inexpensive and faster option or solution for learning and development by cutting time and expense for travel or seeking new knowledge.

Bauer (1997) described the internet as a 'vehicle that drives learners more quickly

through the journey of learning and development' (p. 22). However, online sources can present false and misleading information because there is no limit or effective supervision on its contents.

As experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, online meeting platforms have become an essential commodity as online forums become increasingly active, and there is greater demand for online training courses, resulting in a sharp increase in the number of social media users. Figure 3.6 shows the increase in online and digital activities during the pandemic (<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-july-global-statshot>).

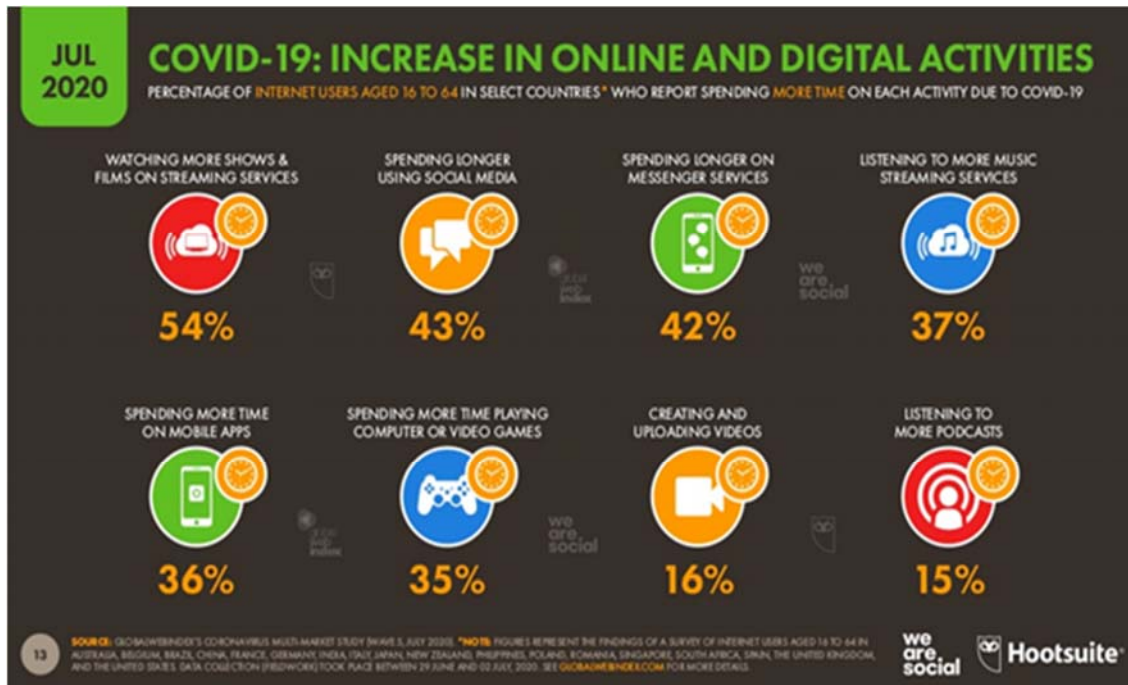


Figure 3.6 COVID-19 increase in online and digital activities

By participating and being an active member of an online forum allows a staff member to use the internet for his/her own professional development. Staff members could use these forums to learn and develop professionally, and to be introduced to new sources, links or websites for further learning and development. Online forums

can be accessed at any time without causing any effect on staff members' daily job obligations. Figure 3.7 shows the number of Saudi internet users from 2015 to 2025 (<https://www.statista.com/statistics/462959/internet-users-saudi-arabia/>, which stated: "In 2025, the number of internet users in Saudi Arabia is forecasted to reach 36.2 million users, up from around 28.8 million users in 2019.").

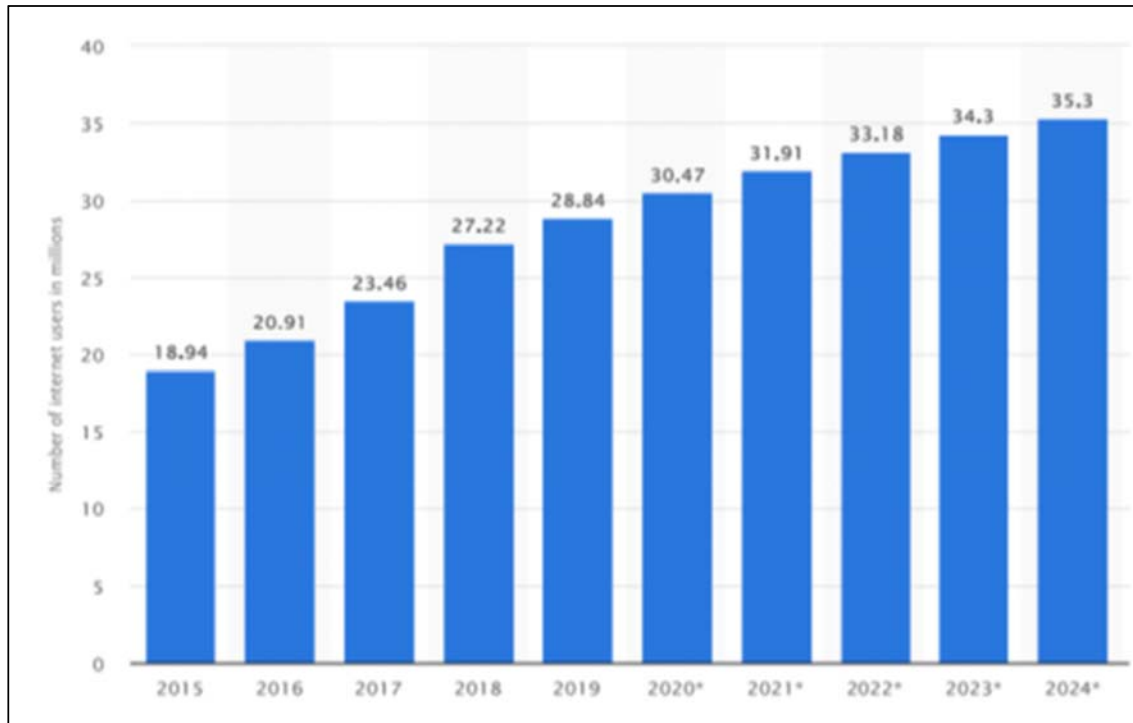


Figure 3.7 Number of Saudi internet users from 2015 to 2024

Online forums also provide the opportunity for members to interact with other members within the same context, even around the globe, which eliminates time and distance boundaries. Nowadays, the majority of organisations producing academic journals, scientific institutions, and conference agencies have websites or interactive forums and social media accounts that provide opportunities for global opinions to be shared and discussed. This point highlights the important roles of leaders and management on professional development experiences of their staff members, that

incorporate suggesting, creating and providing them with different opportunities to learn and develop, apart from traditional professional development programs and opportunities.

In a recent study, Pricope (2018) highlighted the difference between training and professional development, indicating that professional development should pave the way for teachers to choose which knowledge could help them to become more professional in their field. Professional development is perceived as a 'personal choice' to satisfy their professional needs. Pricope's study focused on how internet resources could possibly help to meet teachers' professional development needs and demands. It was conducted on English language teachers in a Romanian Technical University. The study concluded that the internet could provide a chance for staff members to share their knowledge, reflect on their experiences, and support enquiry and collaboration. However, Pricope (2018) stressed that although the internet is a very effective tool that can support professional development, there is still a need for face-to-face interaction, as well as other traditional professional development models or approaches to be implemented concurrently.

In a more relevant study, Alhabahba and Mahfoodh (2016) stated that no studies have been conducted in the Arabian context that have researched or elaborated on using the internet for professional development and supporting self-directed professional development. According to them, Schrum's (1995) study is one of the first studies that discussed using the internet for professional development. Schrum (1995) reported that there was weak support for using the internet for professional development in the State of Georgia (USA) at the time of the study.

This has inspired me to research the use of the internet for professional development at the context of this thesis, explore and examine the participants' perceptions of using the internet to support their professional knowledge and skills, and discover if using the internet in any way supports professional knowledge and skills for participants.

Alhabahba and Mahfoodh (2016) emphasized the importance of managerial support for using the internet as a tool for professional development. They proposed for guided support from policymakers to management and leaders to encourage staff members to use the internet for improving their professional skills and knowledge and for helping them meet their personal needs. They also found that members of TESOL Arabia use the internet for their professional development, believing that it is an important part of professional growth and learning. They also proposed the inclusion of staff discussions about utilising the internet as a tool for supporting professional development, and emphasised how it could help encourage self-learning and self-directed professional development.

According to the global media insight website, datareportal.com, the total population of Saudi Arabia is 33.85 million; there were 32.23 million internet users in January 2020. The number of internet users has increased by 4.3 million (15%) between 2019 and 2020. It is worth noting that Saudis spend long periods of time on the internet, around eight hours every day. Figure 3.8 provides additional information on internet use in Saudi Arabia.

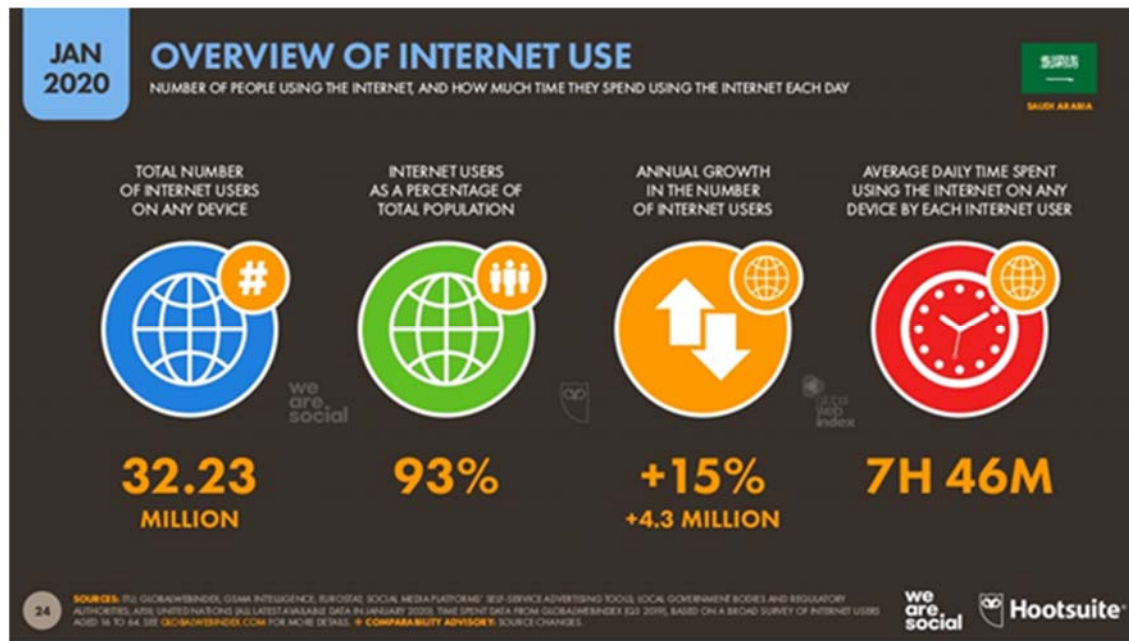


Figure 3.8 Overview of internet use in Saudi Arabia

Few studies in Saudi Arabia have discussed and evaluated utilising the internet as a tool for supporting professional knowledge and skills, including the role of leaders and leadership/management in supporting professional development among their staff members. In this thesis, attempts are made to explore and examine the participants' perceptions of the least effective or most effective models and approaches of professional development, and how they perceive their leaders' roles in supporting their professional development.

3.9 Social media and professional development

A principal part of the internet is social media networks, websites and platforms. Nowadays, smartphones are affordable and are used widely throughout the world. According to datareportal.com (<https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2020-july-global-statshot>), there are 3.96 billion active social media users. With a click of a button one can reach an abundance of data about almost every topic. Instead of

searching websites or online forums, internet users now search different forms of data mines through applications and hashtags in social media networks, such as Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, Instagram and Facebook. As illustrated in this section, a growing body of research shows that social media could be employed in several ways to support professional development.

According to the datareportal.com website, more than half of the world's population uses social media, resulting in an average of 12 new users every second, and one million new social media users daily over the past 12 months. Compared to last year, the number of social media users has increased to 376 million new users (10.5%) who are active on different social media networks and platforms (Figure 3.9).

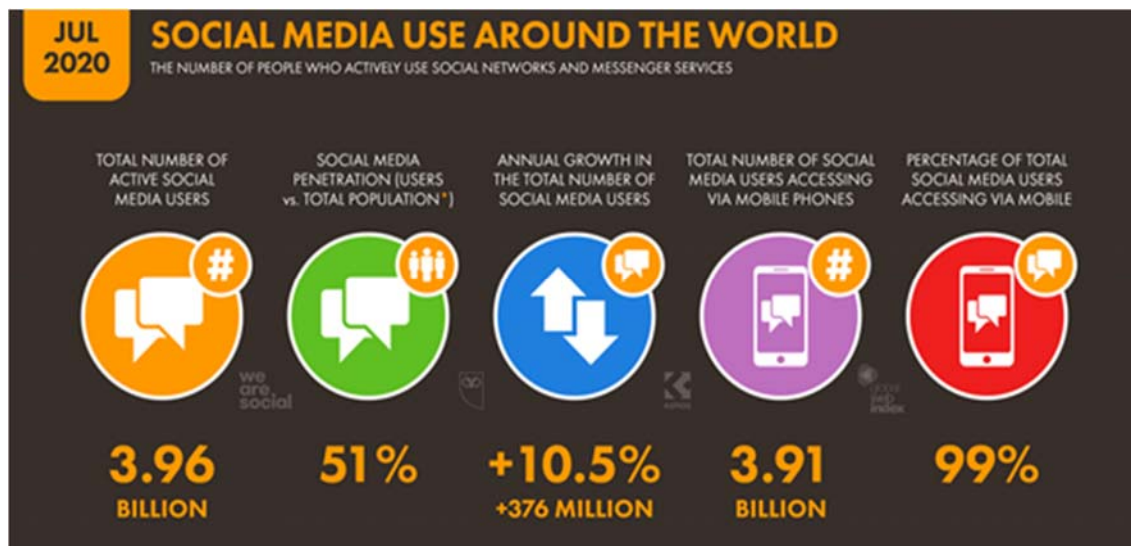


Figure 3.9 Social media use around the world

Furthermore, datareportal.com reported 25 million active social media users in Saudi Arabia in January 2020, keeping in mind that the total population is 33.85 million. The number of social media users increased by two million (8.7%) between April 2019 and January 2020. It is interesting to note that the users are accessing social media via mobile devices, therefore, it appears that laptops and desktops devices are

mainly used for work. The following chart shows more information about social media use in Saudi Arabia (Figure 3.10).

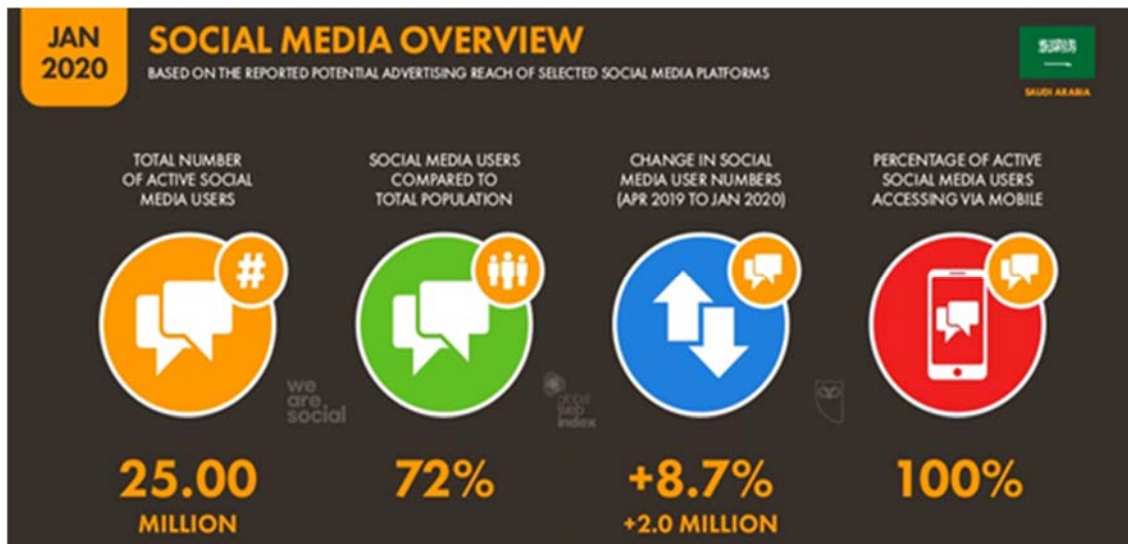


Figure 3.10 Social media overview in Saudi Arabia

Between January 2017 and January 2018, Saudi Arabia experienced the largest global year-on-year increase in social media use, a 32% increase compared to the global average. Other countries with the largest social media usage increase included India, Indonesia and Ghana as technology improved and social media became easily accessible to the population. UAE, South Korea and the UK had the slowest increase with less than 5%. Figure 3.11 shows a considerable increase in social media users in Saudi Arabia in 2018 compared to other countries.

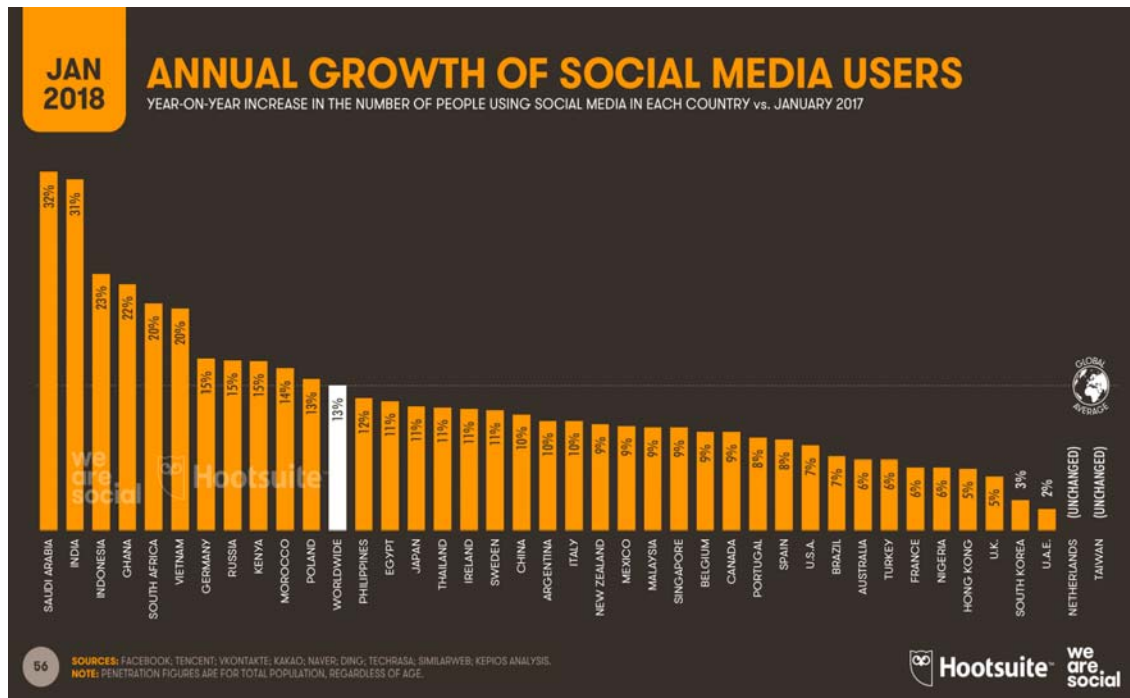


Figure 3.11 Annual growth of social media users

In a recent study in Saudi Arabia, Alsobayel (2016) investigated the use of social media for professional development among 231 healthcare professionals. She used an online survey posted on her Twitter, LinkedIn and WhatsApp accounts. The survey contained three main topics: (i) Which social media were used; (ii) How frequently these social media were used for professional development; and (iii) Perceptions of participants regarding the effect and benefits of using social media for professional development. She found that most participants agree that social media networks are somewhat very, or extremely useful for their professional development.

Alsobayel (2016) also found that 163 (70.6%) of the participants used social media for professional development. This number might signal the need for exploring the use of social media at the IPA. In addition, the results have shown that these Saudi professionals used Twitter most frequently, followed by YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, and finally LinkedIn. She concluded that most uses of social media

networks for professional development was for knowledge exchange, and social media networking, both of which are beneficial in terms of enhancing knowledge and problem-solving. But it was identified that participants found social media networks to be the least effective in terms of developing professional skills. This study has inspired me to explore the perceptions of IPA staff members and leaders regarding utilising social media as a tool to support their professional development.

In another exploratory study, Forte, Humpherys and Park (2012) used surveys, interviews and content analysis to explore how teachers use Twitter in their practice to become better teachers. The study concluded that Twitter could be used as a bridge to connect professionals in the same field because it provides a chance to share experiences and ideas. This ideology supported Weisgerber and Butler's (2011) argument of using social media as a professional development tool. They proposed the use of social media to create a Personal Learning Network (PLN) which is recognised as a combination of following experienced people and other relevant resources on social media to help guide informal learning and support professional development.

While the idea of life-long learning may not be new, many academics may be unfamiliar with the concept of using social media technologies to do so in the open by deliberately building personal learning networks (PLNs) designed to connect them to a community of experts. (Weisgerber & Butler, 2011, p. 340)

Weisgerber and Butler (2011) suggested setting up a PLN by using Twitter (Figure 3.12).

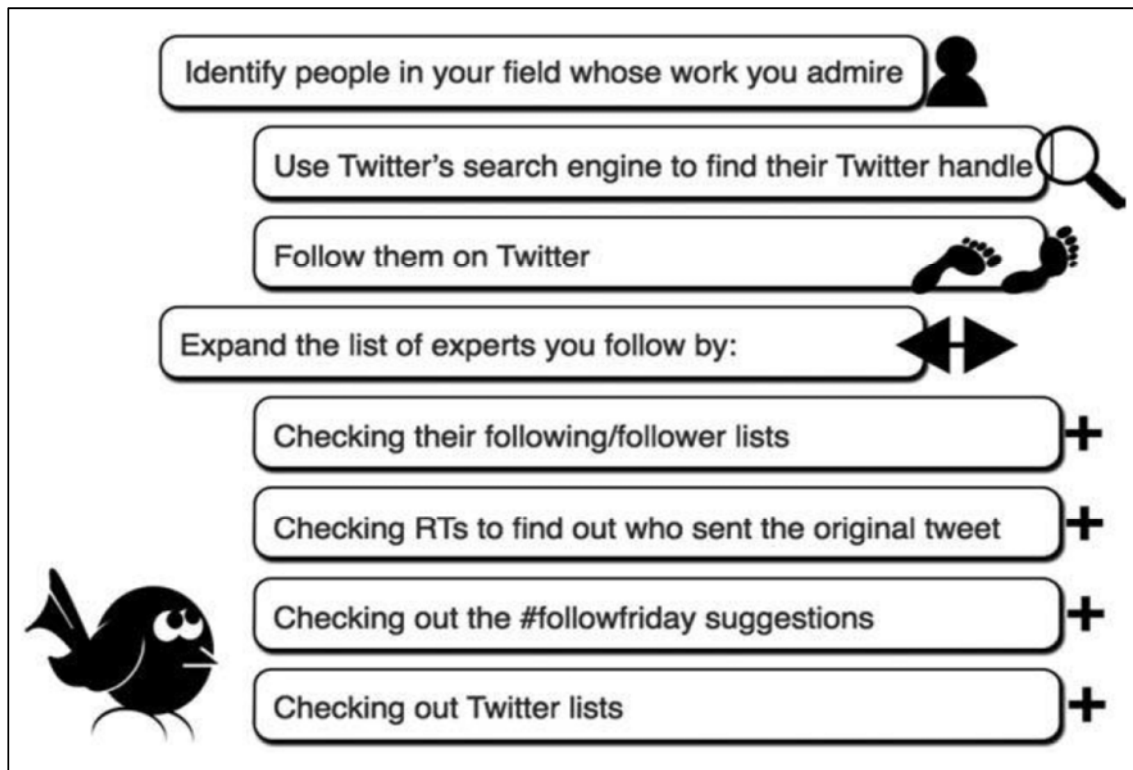


Figure 3.12 Setting up a PLN using Twitter (Weisgerber & Butler, 2011)

In another study, Carpenter (2015) examined how pre-service teachers used Twitter to access a survey to explore whether they had continued to use Twitter for professional development after graduation. Students were asked whether Twitter has succeeded or failed to contribute to their professional development and learning. Carpenter (2015) concluded that most participants continued to use Twitter for improving practice and to gain new knowledge after they had graduated.

Carpenter (2015) claimed that Twitter could be described as a social constructivist approach to learning, because it supports sharing knowledge and interacting with other professionals in the same field. Through Twitter's hashtags, users could discuss their concerns without constraints associated typically with other

traditional professional development models and approaches in less structured forms of discussions, thus, eliminating hierarchical and bureaucratic, geographic and formal boundaries:

Social media such as Twitter may broaden novices' interactions with practicing teachers in ways that allow them to draw upon a variety of different mentoring resources. (Carpenter, 2015, p. 224)

In other words, social media networks can be used as a new platform to support professional development; it will bridge the gap between different cultures, allowing staff members to become exposed to other global perspectives about their practices and professions:

Rather than relying upon Google's algorithms to find teaching resources, pre-service teachers can employ tools such as Twitter to crowd-source the gathering and curation of education content. (Carpenter, 2015, p. 227)

Moreover, Donelan (2016) suggested offering training programs aimed at encouraging the use of social media to eliminate negative perceptions of using social media for professional development purposes. This may be worth further investigation, since few studies in Saudi Arabia have elaborated on exploring the perceptions regarding utilising social media as a tool for supporting professional skills and knowledge. However, Alsobayel's (2016) study in Saudi Arabia found that Twitter is the most used social media network. In this thesis, it might be useful and helpful to explore the social media networks that participants prefer to use.

Donelan (2016) focused on how academics use social media to communicate and collaborate and share information with other professionals in the same field. He stated: "Twitter offers a space that can be used to publicise links to blogs or 'follow' peers in order to keep up with what others in similar fields are doing" (p. 709). Social

media provides an opportunity for users to create professional networks and build an online personal professional profile.

Donelan (2016) found that 70% of the participants used Twitter to learn about new trends in their fields. She also highlighted the importance of the management/leadership role in supporting this form of professional learning and development. This again highlights the need for exploring leaders and management/leadership roles in supporting professional development. Very few studies in Saudi Arabia have elaborated on the role of leaders and leadership in supporting their staff members' professional development. This is discussed in the following section.

3.10 Leadership and professional development

In light of what has been presented and discussed in this chapter, we notice that leaders can play an important role in their staff members' professional development experiences. On a wider scale, management or leadership could have a direct impact on professional development experiences of both leaders and their staff members. In this section, the distinction between leaders/managers and leadership/management is established.

It is important to mention that the terms 'management' and 'leadership' mean top management, higher administration, committee and whomever is responsible for making decisions at the institutional level; the individuals or groups are those who shape the managerial structure of the work environment by drawing on standards and main objectives and lines for all sectors, departments, leaders/managers and their staff members.

At the IPA, management and leadership are perceived as quality and standards controls. Top managers decide on which standards, internal operations and activities are to be incorporated. Managers and leaders are expected to fulfil top management's leadership vision and agenda. All decisions regarding staff members' and leaders' professional development come from HRD management in coordination with top management and permanent committees of various sectors, however, few decisions are made. The process of determining professional development for staff members and leaders occurs once a year when emails are sent to heads of permanent committees. I was a member of a permanent committee and a director of ELC, but I do not recall discussing matters related to staff members' or leaders' professional development.

Moreover, top management at the IPA determine all organisational aims and objectives. Managers and leaders are expected to fulfil and reflect the values and vision of top management. The leader's role is basically a reward and punishment system for his/her staff members. Managers and leaders who work within senior management have an influence on reaching the standards of achievements based on the organisation's vision.

Effective preparation of staff members at the pre-service stage is essential, and in-service training is equally important, together creating a positive working environment that is crucial towards supporting collaboration, professional learning and development. Leaders with effective leadership skills possess the capability of positively influencing teachers' professional development (Mann, 2005). Leaders and managers could support their staff members' professional development in several ways, such as sharing resources with them or exposing them to different experiences that support their professional growth and learning.

Furthermore, in carrying out professional development initiatives, Hargreaves and Fullan (1992) emphasised the role of leaders in supporting activities that would help teachers to develop professionally, by allocating additional time for them to share and reflect on their experiences and practices. They also mentioned that more needs to be done other than identifying knowledge and skills required to understand or support teacher professional development; it is crucial to recognise the context and different personalities of teachers in order to gain a better understanding of their professional development:

Understanding teacher development involves understanding not only the knowledge and skills that teachers should acquire but also understanding what sort of person the teacher is and the context in which most teachers work. (p. 16)

Additionally, the leadership role in supporting staff and employees, as well as teacher professional development is also essential because it has a direct impact on professional learning:

The absence of a supportive context, of appropriate resourcing and positive leadership, can create serious and perhaps insurmountable difficulties for specific teacher development and educational change initiatives. (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1991, p. 14)

Therefore, it can be summarised that effective leadership and leaders should provide a healthy environment to support professional learning and development by promoting a culture of participation, progress and reform, as well as collaboration among leaders and their staff.

In light of what has been presented in this section, it is fundamental to involve not only staff members in exploring and understanding their professional development, but it is equally crucial to explore and understand their leaders'

perception about their roles in supporting professional development among their staff members. It is also important to mention that few studies have explored and investigated the role of leaders in supporting their staff members' professional development in Saudi Arabia.

3.11 Conclusion

Chapter 3 explains three aims of this research: (i) explore and disseminate the concepts associated with professional development; (ii) provide a background for understanding current knowledge; and (iii) assist in the development of the conceptual and theoretical framework. The literature review has shown that there is a need for developing a professional development system based on the context-specific needs and demands. It has also shown that there is not one ultimate model or approach of professional development, therefore, it is crucial to involve the recipients in the process of decision-making and planning regarding their professional development needs. Additionally, this chapter highlights the importance of qualitative enquiry in exploring and understanding professional development.

A plethora of research on professional development, professional development models, and teacher professional development has been conducted in the United Kingdom and United States. Authors have generally adapted interpretivist approaches and utilised qualitative tools, such as interviews, focus group interviews and observation to understand the professional learning and development of teachers and other professionals (predominantly nurses and doctors). In the Saudi context, most of the research conducted on professional development is based on benefits for employees, and skills and knowledge needed to support their professional development. Other studies have focused on implementing professional

development programs and agendas to support reform and change imposed from above.

In addition, few studies have explored the impact of leaders and their leadership role on the professional development of their staff; few studies have attempted to identify the most preferred or least preferred models or approaches of professional development. Finally, and more specifically, there are almost no studies conducted on the IPA to explore and understand professional development or the provision of professional development in Saudi Arabia. This study, therefore, aims to contribute to the body of knowledge by answering the research question (Chapter 1): *To what extent do staff members of the IPA consider their experiences of professional development to meet their needs?*

In Chapter 4, the underlying methodological and philosophical assumptions underpinning the research design that guided the approach to the data collection methodology and analysis are discussed. At the same time, ethical guidelines and quality assurance measures that were undertaken to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the study are explained.

CHAPTER 4 – RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and explains the design and procedures of this exploratory research that embraces the interpretivist research paradigm. The main purpose of this chapter is to justify the need for utilising the proposed methodology for the exploratory nature of this research based on the following eight step process: (i) discuss and present the research paradigms; (ii) describe the assumptions underpinning the design of the study; (iii) choose and explain the methodology for data collection; (iv) present information on participants; (v) explain the sampling procedure; (vi) describe the data analysis process and procedures; (vii) present the quality measures undertaken to ensure the research is trustworthy and credible; and finally (viii) discuss the ethical considerations including issues related to my role as an IPA faculty staff member.

4.2 Research paradigms

A research paradigm is based on four elements: (i) ontology; (ii) epistemology; (iii) methodology; and (iv) methods (Cohen et al., 2013). The research theoretical framework is based on ontology and epistemology, and the research approaches and tools relate to the methodology and methods. Mackenzie and Kipe (2006) looked into more than 40 research texts in research paradigms; they stated that research paradigm is a “paramount to the choice of methodology” (p. 11). A research paradigm, therefore, could be described as a benchmark that guides researchers when choosing a suitable methodology for their research and study.

4.3 Adopting a research paradigm

Based on the research aims presented in Chapter 1, this study embraces the interpretive/constructionist research paradigm. In this type of research, knowledge is socially constructed. In other words, knowledge is constructed through interactions with members within society (Creswell, 2003). In this study, the goal is to reach an understanding of professional development and the role of leadership (leaders and management) in supporting professional development through participants' experiences and multiple perspectives that are related to, and connected with, the context of this thesis. However, I am not stating that this is the only way or approach of researching professional development, but I would say that it is crucial to consider the context and its needs, for participants' voices to be heard, to provide a chance to elaborate on their experiences, and to express their needs and concerns.

As aforementioned, the interpretivist paradigm is based on the understanding of how participants view a phenomenon in their own context. This means that knowledge about professional development is socially constructed (Creswell, 2013). Therefore, this study attempts to understand participants' perspectives and perceptions toward their own experiences of professional development because understanding is the core concept of interpretive/constructionist research (Goodsell, 2013; Creswell, 2014; Wahyani 2012). Dall'Alba and Sandberg (2006) also suggested that research on professional development without a core understanding of participants' qualitative perceptions of practice and context is incomplete. They argued for the need of analysing and examining professionals' understanding of practice and context via qualitative approaches as a launching ground for improvement and reform.

The research questions are directed at participants' experiences; they call for adopting the interpretivist research paradigm. As echoed by Whitcomb, Borko and Liston (2009), it is essential to employ an interpretive research design to gain a wider understanding of the participants' needs and experiences of professional development, and to create a new system of professional development based on interpretive enquiry of the context. Thus, it could be said that ontologically, IPA leaders and their staff members hold multiple views of reality about professional development. Epistemologically, I interact with the participants to explore their professional development experiences and needs. In light of this, knowledge is seen as subjective; it is personally and socially constructed knowledge, because my understanding is an interpretation of my own professional experience and the participants' multiple perspectives and views (Klein & Myers, 1999; Goodsell, 2013).

The main purpose of this research is to explore professional development within the experiences and multiple views of the participants. Therefore, methodologically, this reach is exploratory in nature and design, which means that knowledge is based on generating qualitative data from the participants, rather than testing a pre-existed theory or hypothesis (Mustafa, 2011). In order to gain deeper insights into participants' perceptions and perspectives, there is a need to have a dialogue with them and to listen to them. According to Creswell (2014), exploratory research design is when "the researcher seeks to listen to participants and builds an understanding based on what is heard" (p. 61). In light of this, this study utilises data collection methods based on the adopted paradigm and exploratory nature of this study (discussed in following sections).

4.4 Data collection methods

This exploratory research utilised three data collection methods: surveys, interviews and focus-groups, used sequentially in three phases (Figure 4.1). These methods were designed to address the research questions in multiple ways to maximise the generation of data. English was the main language of instruction and communication although participants were informed that they could switch between English and Arabic or communicate in only Arabic; this gave them the opportunity to express themselves freely.

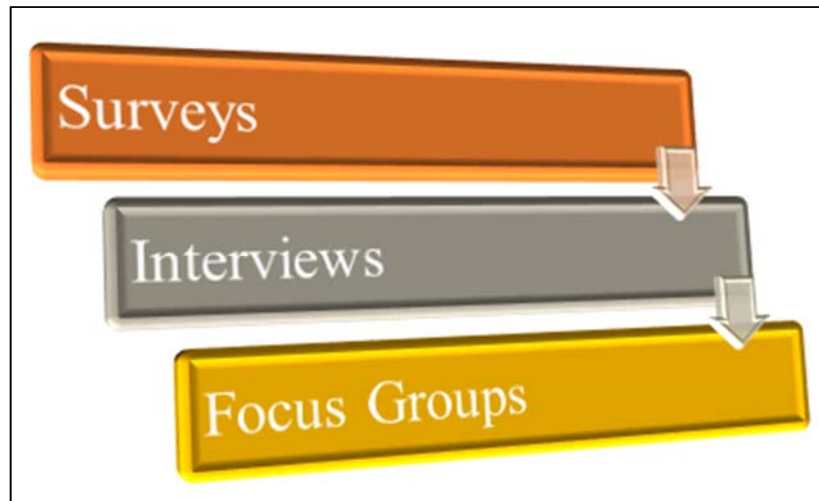


Figure 4.1 Three data collection methods

In the following sections, the proposed methods and how they helped to explore the participants' perceptions and views regarding professional development are explained, along with discussing the advantages and disadvantages of each data collection method.

4.4.1 Surveys

The main purpose of using a survey in this study was to scan as many perceptions and perspectives as possible regarding the least effective or most effective models or

approaches of professional development. From the survey items, the main objective was to explore the participants' perceptions regarding the least effective or most effective models or approaches of professional development. Additionally, it is important to mention that a space was left under each item in the survey for participants to express themselves and to justify their choices and selections if they wished to, as well as to garner additional in-depth data. The survey was emailed to all of the 862 IPA faculty staff members, some of whom worked as, or currently employed as leaders, managers, department heads and sector administrators.

One of the primary objectives of this study was to find out what are the least effective or most effective models of professional development according to the participants' perceptions, experiences and views. Methodologically, surveys are usually linked to positivist research and studies which normally seek numerical data and statistical analysis (Cohen et al., 2000; Jansen, 2010). However, in this study, the survey does not solely pursue frequencies, numerical data or value of variables, but rather looks for relevant dimensions, views and beliefs. As stated by Jansen (2010):

A qualitative survey if it does not count the frequencies of categories (values) but searches for the empirical diversity in the properties of members, even if these properties are expressed in numbers. (p. 4)

Therefore, the survey is mainly utilised for the exploration of meanings, experiences and needs that match the aims of this study.

Qualitative surveys can be very effective for collecting useful information and to scan the perceptions and perspectives of a large number of participants within a particular context. They can provide wider dimensions and further descriptions which helped in exploring new data about the nature of professional development, and the

models and approaches of professional development according to the participants' views. According to Jansen (2010):

The qualitative type of survey does not aim at establishing frequencies, means or other parameters but at determining the diversity of some topic of interest within a given population. This type of survey does not count the number of people with the same characteristics (value of variable) but, it establishes the meaningful variation (relevant dimensions and values) within the population. (p. 2)

The purpose of the research was to highlight issues associated with diversity in meanings and patterns of preferred professional development models instead of numerical distribution. It is to present and discuss the least effective or most effective models of professional development. According to Jansen, it is the analysis of the collected data that determines whether a research is qualitative or quantitative; a qualitative survey does not count the frequencies or values of categories but seeks empirical diversity within a particular population.

Like other data collection tools and methods, surveys have weak and strong aspects. One of the main disadvantages of using surveys is that there is no way to contact the participants after they have completed or participated in the survey unless they want to. However, it is important to mention that my contact details were supplied to all participants if they had any questions or if they wanted to contact me to participate in the semi-structured and focus group interviews, or if they had questions regarding the survey items or generally. The SurveyMonkey online software was used, which was emailed through the survey link to all faculty staff members by the IPA.

One of the advantages of using surveys is the amount of data that can be collected in a relatively short period of time. At the same time, surveys can be cost

efficient because they consume less time and energy in exploring the perceptions of a large number of participants. According to Cohen et al. (2000), surveys can help researchers to gather data quickly and they do not require a big budget. They can help researchers to include as many participants as possible in their research and studies. They can also assist in providing rich descriptive and explanatory data to prove or disprove common beliefs among the target population regarding the investigated phenomenon. Surveys help researchers to observe different responses and to analyse multiple views to provide descriptions of participants' perceptions and perspectives.

Additionally, in this study's survey, participants had the opportunity to express themselves without any form of pressure that interviews and focus groups may cause. Besides feeling free to make their selection, participants had the opportunity to express their opinions and to elaborate on their experiences under each survey item. At the same time, the last item on the survey was designed to shed some light on their satisfaction of the professional development opportunities offered to them. As mentioned earlier, a space was left for participants to complete and freely express themselves without any form of pressure; this aspect can be considered to be one of the main advantages of using surveys.

Prior to concluding this section, it is important to mention that survey items were initially piloted with three staff members from the IPA branch in Jeddah city, Saudi Arabia. Three meetings with three staff members were arranged to discuss the survey items and to tackle any possible ambiguities. The three participants were enthusiastic and showed much interest in the topic of investigation; they believed in its importance. Piloting the survey items helped with the phrasing and formulation of the instruction cover page, as well as how the volunteers were asked to participate in

the interviews. Discussions from piloting the survey convinced me to change the type of items from solely rating each professional development model and approach to a self-completion Likert-scale system. This discussion also encouraged me to include additional interview questions about supporting and improving professional development opportunities.

4.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews fall in between structured and unstructured interviews. They have the advantage of guiding the interview, but at the same time, allow room for an open discussion or questions that may arise during the interview to be addressed (Wahyuni, 2012; Kvale, 1996). Additionally, interviews help participants to express their personal thoughts and beliefs in a comfortable way. Semi-structured interviews assisted in controlling the flow of ideas from the participants and helped the participants to express their views and pose their opinions. They have the advantage of adding explanations and more relevant questions to allow for further elaboration or clarification.

Furthermore, three major disadvantages of using semi-structured interviews or interviews in general are: (i) time-consuming; (ii) difficult to be analysed; not cost-effective. Indeed, more than three months was spent on completing the interviews for this study, which involved travelling to Saudi Arabia and other cities within the country to make a countless number of arrangements, and staying in a hotel for a considerable period. Prior to this stage, much time and effort was spent on piloting the interview questions in Jeddah city where colleagues made the recommendation to add open questions that allowed participants to advise on how to improve the provision of professional development at the IPA. At the same time, it is worth

mentioning that there can be a high degree or level of subjectivity because each interview represents the views of only one person. To address this drawback, the interviews were triangulated with the survey and focus group interview to draw a connection and to present clearer findings.

Semi-structured interviews were nominated as the main and most appropriate data collection method for this study since knowledge was explored and constructed by participants according to the adopted interpretivist research paradigm. Moreover, semi-structured interviews allow researchers to rephrase, modify or delete irrelevant data, or add more questions as needed (Wahyuni, 2012). At the same time, they allow participants to discuss the questions and their answers with the researcher; this helped me to obtain further in-depth data because they provided the opportunity for participants to express their subjective opinions, which allowed me a deeper reflection on their reactions and responses Wahyun (2012). In fact, the semi-structured interviews helped to obtain an abundance of data to address the research questions. Semi-structured interviews also gained deeper insights into the investigated phenomenon by observing verbal and non-verbal reactions (Cohen et al., 2011). The ability to interact more with participants based on what was encountered and observed during the interviews was achieved.

All interviews were conducted in Riyadh city, the capital of Saudi Arabia at IPA headquarters. Although I work at the IPA branch in Jeddah city, I had never worked at the IPA headquarters or in Riyadh city. All participants were interviewed in their own work offices during their free time and break. It is important to mention that there was no time limit for the interviews, however, most interviews lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. All the interview data was collected and transcribed in English.

4.4.3 Focus group interview

Focus group interviews comprise of a combination of observations and interviews (Howell, 2013). In focus groups, researchers usually form small groups of four to 12 participants to discuss a specific topic or issue in a relaxed atmosphere (Wilson, 1997). Focus groups help researchers to explore the participants' perceptions and experiences, as well as allow participants to control the discussion, ask questions, and pose their opinions (Howell, 2013). They motivate participants to share their knowledge and views with other participants, which in turn help researchers to gain more in-depth data (Howell, 2013). At the same time, they help researchers to discover new issues about the investigated phenomena that may arise from the discussion (Howell, 2013). In this type of interview, participants are likely to forget about the observer, leading them to freely express their views and share their experiences with others in the group. It provides room for social interaction among the participants; this matches the adopted interpretivist research paradigm in this study.

In this study, the focus group interview was conducted after the semi-structured interviews to maximise the generation of data, and to obtain deeper insight into participants' perceptions of professional development. The focus group interview was utilised to explore new ideas and themes that may have emerged from the discussion, and to provide a wider window to discuss issues associated with the provision of professional development. Additionally, the scope of the research questions needed to utilise diverse research methods to garner more in-depth data. As mentioned earlier, the main aim of incorporating focus group interview in the study was to discover new ideas and to explore innovative issues and concerns that may have arisen from the discussion.

In this study, six faculty staff members volunteered to participate, however, none of them participated in the semi-structured interviews, but they all completed the survey. They were given the following pseudonyms: Sultan, Hassan, Abdullah, Ali, Adel and Hamed. As echoed by Kvale (1996), it is important to briefly introduce the purpose of the interview prior to initiating it; it is equally important to debrief and highlight the conclusion of the interview. In both types of interviews in this study, all participants were reminded of the purpose of the interview before commencement. A debriefing session was done immediately after each interview ended to inform participants that it had concluded. The participants were asked if they had further questions, or if they wanted to add anything, or if they had concerns prior to ending the interview.

The focus group interview was conducted in a meeting room at IPA headquarters in Riyadh city; it lasted one hour and 20 minutes. Some of the participants knew each other, but no one knew me, the moderator and author of this thesis. However, this did not cause any discomfort as the participants seemed free to discuss the presented topics. An audio recorder was placed in the middle of the table, enabling all participants to observe it. All interview data was collected and transcribed in English. Additionally, it cannot be denied that my role as moderator had some degree of impact on the participants, which may have affected what they expressed. However, based on what I noticed, the participants were a little hesitant to argue their points at the beginning, but after 10 minutes, they started to interact more with each other and my presence seemed to quickly fade in the background, resulting in the focus more on expressing their views and proving their point.

4.5 Research sampling and participants

This study was conducted at the IPA in Saudi Arabia. The reason this institution was chosen was because of its responsibility towards supporting professional development at the national level. As presented in Chapter 2, the IPA is responsible for supporting and improving professional development within most government ministries, commissions and agencies. The IPA is the main professional development provider for the majority of government employees in Saudi Arabia. Its main branch is located in the capital of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh; there are three male branches in Jeddah, Dammam and Abaha, and three female branches in Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam (refer to Chapter 2 for further details).

It is essential to mention that I have been working for the IPA as a faculty staff member since 2008. It is equally important to mention that I was not able to recruit any participants from the female branches due to cultural and religious constraints. However, because the survey was emailed to all branches, female voices were allowed to be heard. This point will be further discussed in Chapter 7 as part of the research's limitations. The IPA has a total of 862 faculty staff members in all branches, of which 219 staff members hold a BA degree and are currently preparing to attain their master's degrees. All staff members must work for one year in different management roles, and then they study English for one year at the IPA ELC before perusing their master's degrees abroad (refer to Chapter 2 for further details). Sixty-three faculty staff members hold a postgraduate degree, 449 staff members hold an master's degree, and 131 staff members hold a doctorate degree.

After gaining permission from the Centre of Research and Studies (refer to Appendix 6), the survey was emailed to all IPA faculty staff members, including leaders, managers, department heads and sectors because all leaders at the IPA are

basically faculty staff members before they are nominated for leadership and administrative duties. A total of 191 participants took part in completing the survey. SurveyMonkey was used to design the survey, which included a space under each question in the survey for the participant to comment and express his/her opinions. However, it was not possible to trace each respondent's answers and comments because their identity and privacy was protected. In the instruction page, a proposal was put forward for volunteers to participate in both interviews or to seek further information about the research project.

There are different types of research sampling. The sampling of this study mainly falls under the purposive convenience sampling approach which is a type of non-probability sampling, and it is the most common approach in qualitative research design (Cohen et al., 2000). Unlike the purposeful or probability sampling in quantitative approaches, it is not intended to represent the whole population. Additionally, as mentioned above, the survey was emailed to all IPA faculty staff members to allow for more voices to be heard and to give an extra opportunity for female participants to take part in the study. All the participants of this study are bilingual (i.e. Arabic and English) and most have obtained their master's degree or doctorate either from the United States or United Kingdom. In the following sections, I will provide more details about the participants of this study.

One of the main aims of this study is to understand and explore the individual's perceptions and experiences of professional development in rich detail and to garner more in-depth data about the most preferred and least preferred models of professional development. In this study, 21 participants volunteered to participate in the semi-structured interviews. One of the volunteers later apologised for changing his mind. Therefore, 20 semi-structured interviews, consisting of 12 staff

members and eight leaders from several departments and sectors were conducted. All 20 participants in the semi-structured interviews were either labelled ‘staff member’ or ‘leader’ without mentioning their names to protect their identity and for privacy reasons (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Participants in semi-structured interviews

Participants	Major	Qualification	Experience
Staff Member-1	Linguistics	Doctorate	14 years
Staff Member-2	Accounting	Master’s degree	16 years
Staff Member-3	Business Administration	Master’s degree	12 years
Staff Member-4	Healthcare Management	Master’s degree	25 years
Staff Member-5	Computer Science	Master’s degree	17 years
Staff Member-6	Business Administration	Master’s degree	15 years
Staff Member-7	Information Studies	Master’s degree	10 years
Staff Member-8	Accounting	Master’s degree	11 years
Staff Member-9	Business Administration	Master’s degree	18 years
Staff Member-10	Statistics	Master’s degree	7 years
Staff Member-11	Public Administration	Master’s degree	8 years
Staff Member-12	Public Administration	Master’s degree	7 years
Leader-1	Law	Doctorate	15 years
Leader-2	Applied Linguistics	Doctorate	20 years
Leader-3	Business Administration	Master’s degree	23 years
Leader-4	Office Management	Postgraduate degree	32 years
Leader-5	Applied Linguistics	Doctorate	19 years
Leader-6	Public Administration	Master’s degree	9 years
Leader-7	Public Administration	Master’s degree	12 years
Leader-8	Office Management	Doctorate	24 years

As presented earlier, the plan was to understand professional development, professional development models, and the role of leadership (leaders and management) in supporting professional development through participant experiences and their multiple perspectives that are interrelated with the social interaction with each other and connected to the context of this study. The sampling strategy, therefore, seemed to meet the aims of this study and appeared to fit with the adopted research paradigm. Initially, 13 staff members volunteered to participate in the focus group interview. However, seven apologised at a later stage, leaving six staff members to participate.

More details about protecting the identities and privacy of the research participants is discussed in Section 4.8. In the following section, data analysis procedures and techniques are explained.

Table 4.2 Focus group interview participants

Participants	Major	Qualification	Experience
Sultan	Accounting	Master's degree	9 years
Hassan	Business Administration	Master's degree	17 years
Abdullah	Office Management	Postgraduate degree	26 years
Ali	TESOL	Doctorate	16 years
Adel	Applied Linguistics	Doctorate	14 years
Hamed	TESOL	Master's degree	5 years

4.6 Data analysis and interpretation

The collected data were analysed through a thematic analysis process. The adopted general inductive approach of data analysis matched the subjective epistemology and interpretivist/constructionist understanding of the participants' experiences and

views of professional development and provision for professional development. The proposed thematic analysis and general inductive approach to qualitative data analysis seemed to be compatible with the adopted research paradigm and methodology. However, according to Creswell (2011), “there is no single, accepted approach to analysing qualitative data” (p. 238).

In this study, I followed Thomas’ (2006) general inductive approach of analysing qualitative data. First, all audio files were transcribed by creating different files for each data collection method with each interview saved in a separate Word document. Transcribing the audio files helped me to analyse the data closely and assisted in drawing a connection between the participants’ ideas and thoughts by highlighting them on the typed texts. Then, I familiarized myself with the transcribed data by reading through them, dividing and highlighting the transcript into small chunks of data. As shown in Appendix 9, a line-by-line analysis was conducted to obtain a general view of the data. Coding of the data followed at the same time as writing down notes while reading and coding the transcripts. According to Creswell (2014), coding is the process of organising data into chunks or segments. During the coding process, I kept an eye on the research aims and questions, but at the same time, I looked for new emergent ideas and thoughts within the data.

Transcripts were coded in the same way, including comments received from the survey. Notes were taken about the most common, different and similar ideas, thoughts and concerns found within the data in a separate Word document. Then, the codes were clustered under categories based on their similarities, followed by classifying the categories under broader themes. Finally, a spreadsheet was created with the initial list of themes. Then, I verified all codes, categories and themes several times over, which assisted me to delete some of the themes and combine others.

Different data obtained from the three data collection methods triangulated at the same time to create meanings are presented in Chapter 5. Additionally, it is important to mention that all obtained data were stored in a safe place to protect them from damage or loss. I used my University of Exeter One-Drive account, which is a password protected soft drive to maintain several copies. In the following section, issues related to data quality and credibility are discussed.

4.7 Research and data quality

Debates over the quality of qualitative research started by positivism research approaches supporters based on concerns over validity and reliability (Seale, 1999). Quality standards of positivist research are validity, reliability, objectivity, and generalisability (Wahyuni, 2012). In response to claims by positivist researchers, interpretivist researchers develop different sets of research and data quality criteria and standards to address issues related to research rigour. To sum up, this study adopted the the following criteria of qualitative research quality, as presented by Lincoln and Guba (1985) (Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Criteria of qualitative research quality

Standards adopted in this study	Qualitative criteria equivalence
Truthfulness	Credibility
Consistency	Dependability
Applicability	Transferability
Neutrality	Confirmability

Therefore, the quality of data in this study is discussed from three main interpretivist research quality pillars: credibility, transferability and confirmability. These quality

assurance criteria meet the adopted interpretivist research paradigm, but they contradict with the main standards of reliability and repeatability within the positivist paradigm. Following are the measures taken to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the study findings. According to Bryman (2008), trustworthiness is to embrace “a set of criteria advocated by some writers for assessing the quality of qualitative research” (p. 700) through showing how the research was conducted in detail.

Thus, a detailed description of the data collection process that observes all steps taken is presented in this chapter to support the credibility of the study. As aforementioned, briefing and debriefing procedures were followed in both types of interviews (Kvale, 1996). Any concerns prior to starting the interviews were addressed, as well as the participants were reminded about the purpose of the interview before commencing. In concluding the interviews, the participants were asked if they had any questions, if they wanted to add anything, or if they had any concerns before finalising the interviews. With no time limit applied to the interviews, the participants were able to fully express themselves and to check their answers and further comments.

In addition, all participants and the researcher have previously played a part in the IPA research setting and Saudi Arabia context. As presented in Section 4.5, some participants had attained more than 20 years of experience, with all participants in both interviews holding a postgraduate degree. This means that the participants of this study have wide experience in the provision of professional development at the IPA. Further credibility measures were obtained from data handling and reporting which can be observed in Chapter 5. Finally, all data obtained from the three data collection methods were triangulated and presented in a way to be understood

together and separately. Data triangulation supported the understanding of participants' views and concerns in greater details and from different angles. It also helped to capture any irregularities and inconsistencies of the findings obtained from the three different data collection methods.

Furthermore, confirmability in this study is seen within the connection between research claims and obtained data, apart from the researcher's interpretation of data (Cohen et al., 2013). In Chapter 5, extracts and examples are presented from the obtained data. Simultaneously, in Chapter 6, the findings with other studies and research across the body of literature have been linked and interrelated to contextualise this study in the field of professional development. Additionally, it is important to mention that I was fully aware of my role as a researcher working for the same organisation during the research. Thus, as presented in Section 4.5, I interviewed participants from different IPA branches except the branch in Jeddah city where I previously worked; this was to ensure that participants felt comfortable to express themselves when sharing their personal experiences and addressing issues related to research confirmability.

Presenting issues related to the provision of professional development in this specific research setting and context (Saudi Arabia) may assist future research studies to transfer the methods employed in this one, and also by comparing the findings. It could be said that the findings of this study can be transferred to other higher education institutions in Saudi Arabia, or perhaps regional countries, such as the Arabian Gulf region (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates), and possibly Arab countries in the Middle East. Therefore, the findings of this study could be transferred to other similar settings and contexts, but cannot be generalised (Cohen et al., 2000).

4.8 Ethical considerations of research

This study was conducted in compliance with the protocols, standards and procedures proposed by the British Educational Research Association (BERA). According to the BERA, “educational research should be conducted within an ethic of respect for: the person, knowledge, democratic values, quality of educational research and academic freedom” (<https://www.bera.ac.uk/>, 2011). Additionally, this study was conducted in compliance with the University of Exeter ethical framework and guidelines. An ethical approval was obtained from the ethics committee at the University of Exeter (refer to Appendix 5 for further details). Prior to embarking on the data collection trip, approval was sought from the University of Exeter, as well as permission obtained from the IPA to conduct interviews with faculty staff members and leaders, and to email the survey link to all IPA faculty staff members (Appendix 5 – approval letter).

Many researchers, such as Cohen et al. (2000, 2011), Guba and Lincoln (1994), Mustafa (2011), Mann (2011) and Howell (2013) have agreed that interpretive research requires researchers to be more careful with ethical considerations. Unlike positivist research, in most interpretive studies, there is a direct and close contact with the participants, however, this could create several issues in different aspects at different stages of the research process. Therefore, after obtaining all the required permissions, I communicated with the participants with the consideration of research ethical criteria and standards. All participants were provided with consent forms which included information about the purpose of the study and their role in contributing to the research objectives. They were also reminded that they had the right to withdraw from participating in the study at any time or stage without justification. All participants signed an informed consent form (Appendix 7).

Furthermore, in using surveys and questionnaires, it is important to take into account the possible impact of its questions on privacy (Cohen et al. 2000). The participants are subjects not objects of the research projects, and their emotions, feelings and reactions need to be carefully considered. As in using other data collection methods, participants need to be provided with an informed consent to make them aware of their rights to withdraw from participating in the research project at any time without having to provide any justification. This was stated on the first page of the survey (refer to Appendix 1 for further details). At the same time, it is extremely important to assure participants of confidentiality, anonymity and non-traceability. Therefore, all participants were reminded that the survey was aimed at gathering their responses, replies and answers without any chance of tracing their identities, therefore, all participants in the semi-structured interviews were given a number and labelled as a staff member or leader to protect their identities. In the focus group interview, each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their identity (Lahman, 2015).

Throughout all stages of the data collection process, all participants were made to feel comfortable in terms of choosing a time and place to conduct the interviews. Additionally, they were informed that an audio recorder was to be used, which was placed at the centre of the table in both interviews. Participants were provided with my contact information including email address and cell-phone number, and informed them that they could contact me at any time to discuss any issues or concerns, or if they had questions regarding the survey, interviews and the focus group interview. I also repeatedly reminded the participants that their identities were protected, and they were fully free to express themselves. Any decisions to withdraw from the research at any stage was also repeatedly conveyed and acknowledged.

Finally, the points presented in this chapter have helped me to understand my role and the tasks involved in this study, from data collection to data analysis and interpretation. I became fully aware of the impact of my presence as a researcher and an employee working at the same institution. It is also very important to acknowledge that my social, cultural and educational backgrounds and experiences may have affected the research process. This can be seen in Chapter 1 where I explain the rationale for undertaking this research and how my sense of failure in supporting my staff members' professional development was triggered after undertaking a training module on professionalism as part of my doctorate program.

Therefore, being aware of the impact of my personal position and the nature of my interaction with participants in generating knowledge has helped me to minimize and reduce bias or subjectivity. However, research always involves some form of subjectivity. Researchers need to be self-reflective in considering the impact of their roles, but "no matter how reflective they are, they can never objectively describe something as it is" (Holmes, 2020, p. 4).

Thus, a detailed description of the data collection process that observed all steps taken is presented in this chapter to support the credibility of the study. Additionally, as presented earlier in this chapter, briefing and debriefing procedures were followed in both types of interviews (Kvale, 1996).

As presented in Section 4.5, the decision to withdraw from the research at any stage was also repeatedly conveyed and acknowledged. I only interviewed participants from all IPA branches except the Jeddah City branch where I had previously worked. However, my involvement with the same organization or as a researcher would have influenced participants in one way or another, but explaining

the importance of this study to improve the provision of professional development encouraged participants to become enthusiastic about sharing their personal experiences and concerns. Additionally, by ensuring they felt comfortable about sharing their thoughts and views, building a rapport, and planting seeds of trust in their hearts, has helped me to minimize and reduce the issue of my presence as the researcher, as well as assisted me to dig deeper into their perceptions and perspectives regarding professional development.

4.9 Summary

In this chapter, I introduce the philosophical assumptions underpinning the methodological choices of this study which has guided the process of data collection and analysis. First, I explain and justify the adopted methodology and proposed data collection methods. Then, I present and describe data analysis steps and procedures, proceeded by a detailed description of the research participants. Finally, issues related to data quality measures and ethical guidelines are described and discussed in detail, including samples and example forms in the relevant appendices. In the following chapter, I present the findings obtained from the analysis of data based on the described procedures in this chapter.

CHAPTER 5 – RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this chapter, I present the findings based on the analysis of data obtained from the survey, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussion. The themes found in all three datasets were coordinated to facilitate the understanding of the collected data. These sets of data were triangulated to support each other through themes revealed and identified within all of them. In the next discussion chapter, I consider the findings in light of my review of the relevant literature presented in Chapter 3, and to what extent these findings have assisted me in addressing the research question.

The presented findings in this chapter help to explore and understand professional development experiences and needs of staff members and leaders. The findings also help to clarify the culture of professionalism at the IPA. At the same time, these findings support the answers to the research questions, and facilitate the understanding of what IPA staff members consider to be the least effective and most effective models or approaches of professional development, as well as to what extent do IPA staff members consider their experiences of professional development in meeting their needs.

In addition, based on the sub-questions of this thesis, the findings present and outline the main differences in the perceptions of leaders, as opposed to staff members, regarding the provision for professional development. In this chapter, I also present the participants' perceptions regarding management and leaders' roles in supporting professional development.

5.1 Findings from the survey

The first research question asked was: *To what extent do staff members of the IPA consider their experiences of professional development to meet their needs?* and the second question explored: *What are their perceptions as to the least effective or most effective models of professional development?* The survey contained items that were aimed at addressing the research questions and generating data to support the findings from both types of interviews.

With the use of SurveyMonkey, I asked the Management of Internal Communication to email the survey link to all IPA Faculty staff members (for further details, refer to Chapter 4). In the survey, under each question, a space was allocated for participants to comment and express their opinions, however, it was not possible to trace each respondent's comment due to the protection of their privacy. The main aim was to generate as much data as possible, and to obtain a general view of participant perception. These comments from both types of interview were analysed to uncover ideas that may support or contradict the findings, and to add more insights into the survey findings.

A total of 191 responses were received, of which 51.31% of participants worked as a manager, leader, department head or program director. This meant that a more than half of the respondents had leadership experience. The following pie-chart (Figure 5.1) shows the percentage distribution of the responses:

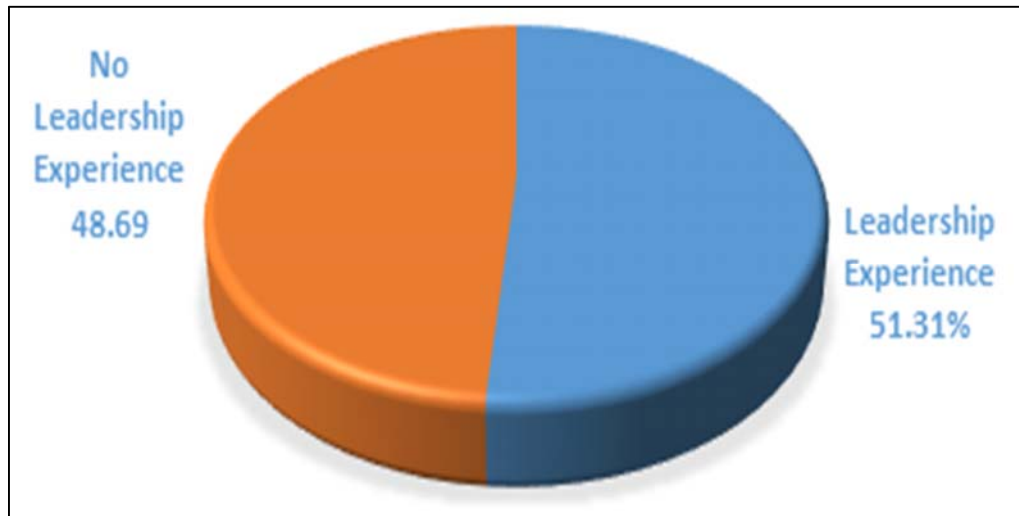


Figure 5.1 Percentage of participants with leadership experience

First of all, data obtained from the survey showed that *Using the internet* is the preferred type of learning and development. The majority of respondents (93.02%) rated it as *very and extremely effective*. The word 'effective' means that the participants perceived it to have an impact on the development of their professional knowledge and skills. For instance, when they chose 'very effective', it meant that they thought the selected approach or tool was very helpful in developing their professional knowledge and skills. Almost all commentators praised *Using the internet* as a beneficial and effective tool for learning and development. Some perceived it as an essential part of work and professional development. Following are three example extracts of their comments:

Internet is now full of webinars and enriching resources that are beneficial.

Up to date information instant source for information.

These days we cannot work without the internet, it is the main condition to progress in your work.

Although *Using the internet* was the highest rated item on the survey, *Using social media* was not rated in the same way, keeping in mind that both could possibly be

categorised as the same type of activity or tool. Surprisingly, this type of learning and development was rated the second lowest among all survey items after Question 11, *Using managers to teach staff*, despite the massive support for using the internet.

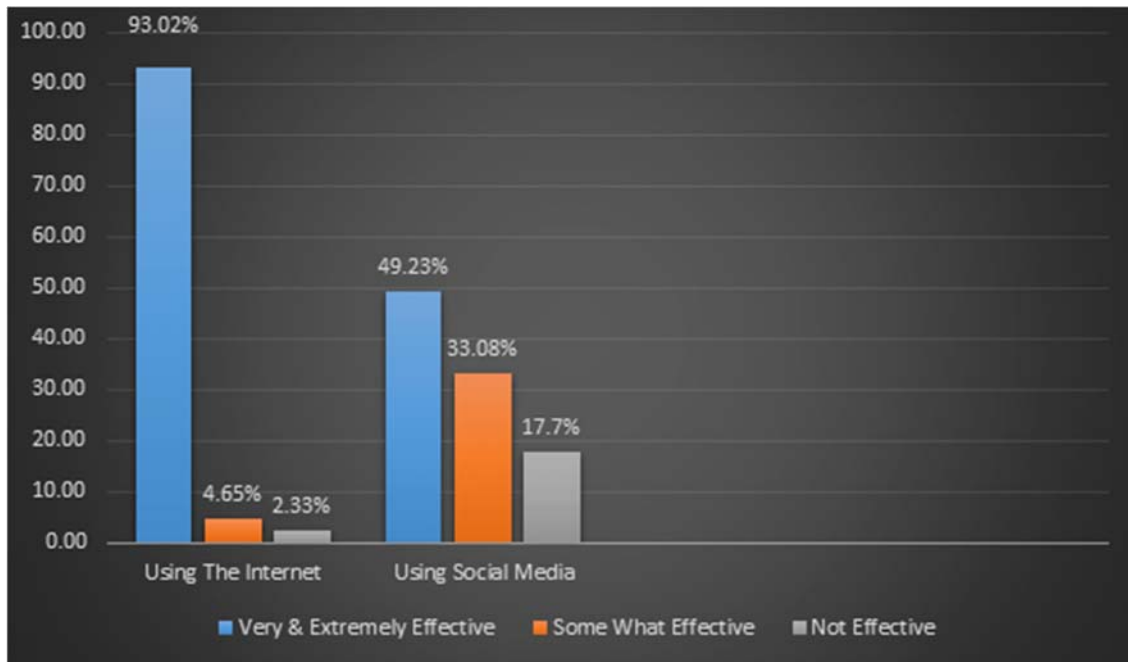


Figure 5.2 Comparison of *Using the internet* and *Using social media*

More than half of the respondents (50.78%) seemed to be unsure of its effectiveness. Some thought that it could be an effective tool used to communicate with other professionals in the field; others thought that the information on social media could not be trusted. Most respondents thought that social media is solely used for fun and entertainment. The following are three example extracts of their different views:

Social media like Facebook and twitter is surely vibrant with a professional community who is posting and tweeting and re-tweeting interesting and new development in the field.

I do not trust information on social media.

Social media iffy sources aren't the best for professional knowledge except very few examples.

Another point worth noting is how the participants reacted to Questions 2 and 3. On the one hand, the majority of respondents seemed to be in doubt about the effectiveness of the locally tailored and offered training programs. On the other hand, a much higher agreement was observed on the abroad training programs as 62.8% believed it was a very and extremely effective approach in supporting their professional development.

It is important to mention that very few programs are offered locally at the same context or within the organisation except for one training program (Train the Trainer), an overseas program offered to newly qualified master's degree graduates in 2013 and 2014, including the researcher of this thesis. However, most IPA staff members have undertaken their training at the IPA when they returned from abroad after they having attained their master's degree and before commencing teaching classes or presenting training programs for the first time.

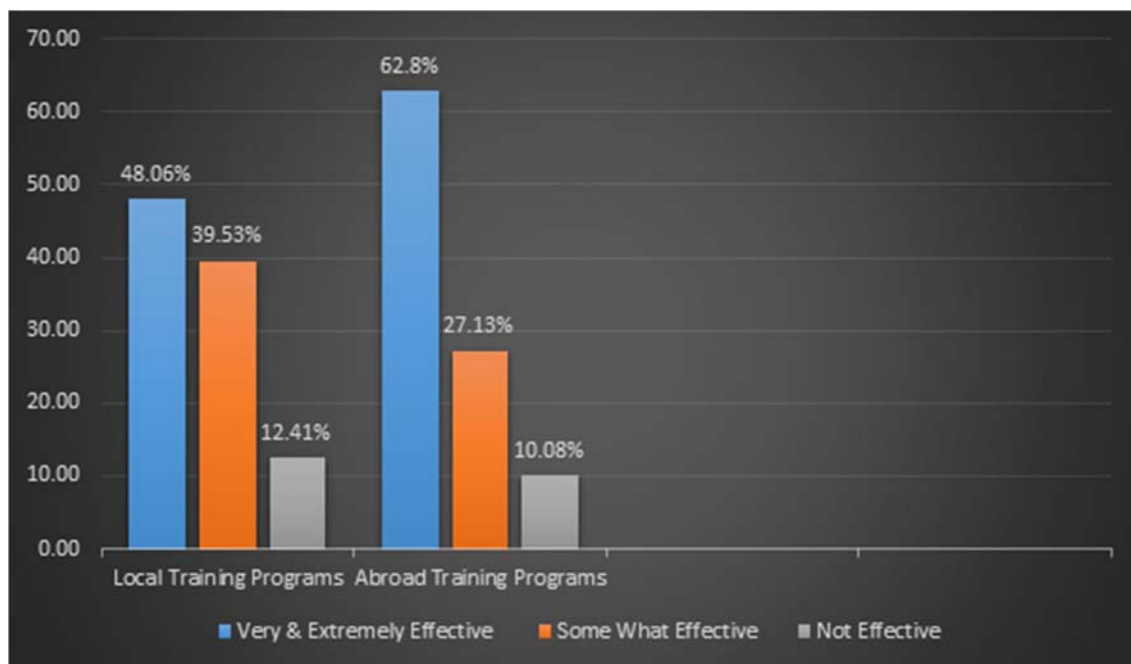


Figure 5.3 Comparison of *Local training programs* and *Abroad training programs*

This approach of *Locally designed and offered training programs* was presented in the survey to explore the participants' views and to clarify their perceptions, including how this approach would meet their needs if it was to be implemented in a wider scope to cover broader needs. It seemed that the majority of the participants were unsure of its effectiveness, as 51.94% rated it as *somewhat and not effective*. A number of respondents expressed that the current and local professional development opportunities are irrelevant to their studies, and therefore do not meet their needs. The following are three example extracts of their comments under Question 2 on the survey:

Not focused on my major.

It's not related to my major.

No training in my field, just the needs of IPA vision.

From the above comments, it can be seen that there is a lack of relevance to the participants individual professional development needs. The third comment highlights a 'top-down' approach of the professional development system where the vision and needs of the organisation are privileged. This point is further discussed in the next chapter. Other participants indicated that there are very few opportunities for development. The following are two example extracts of their comments:

In my first two years, I only had one training program.

Only one training program every summer. What can it add for the employee?

It is important to mention that when participants speak of the 'IPA' or 'IPA Management', they mean top management, higher administration or the committees responsible for making decisions at the whole organisational level. Almost all

decisions made concerning staff members' and leaders' professional development come from Human Resource Development Management and Management of Planning and Quality.

It appears that there is a consensus about the effectiveness of the abroad training programs, as 62.8% of respondents rated it as *very and extremely effective*. Most comments under Question 3 emphasised on the importance of this type of learning and development in terms of supporting the participants' professional knowledge of new trends. The following are two example extracts of their comments:

Training programs abroad are effective in that they may help to acquire knowledge about the latest trends in the specific fields of the staff members. If chosen carefully, training programs abroad could also help the IPA faculty to compare and develop their programs in the IPA.

Because they are conducted away from any distractions in an atmosphere where I am physiologically ready to participate and learn, because it combines pleasure and learning at the same time.

As mentioned above, most comments under Question 3 praised this type of learning and development except for one comment:

Most of our colleagues join these courses for travel purposes rather than for training purposes. Also, the money, time, and energy spent are huge in comparison to the return we get from such short courses.

This one point and other ideas are further discussed in the next chapter. Additionally, participant responses were almost identical regarding Questions 6, 7 and 8. Similar activities involving research and academic activities in different ways were acknowledged. Based on Figure 5.4, participating in conferences seemed to be the preferred approach among the participants. However, as reported in some of the comments, action research seemed to be a somewhat effective approach due to its

direct impact on local practice and issues. Many of the participants echoed that due to time constraints, writing for academic journal and participating in conferences are not beneficial or enjoyed.

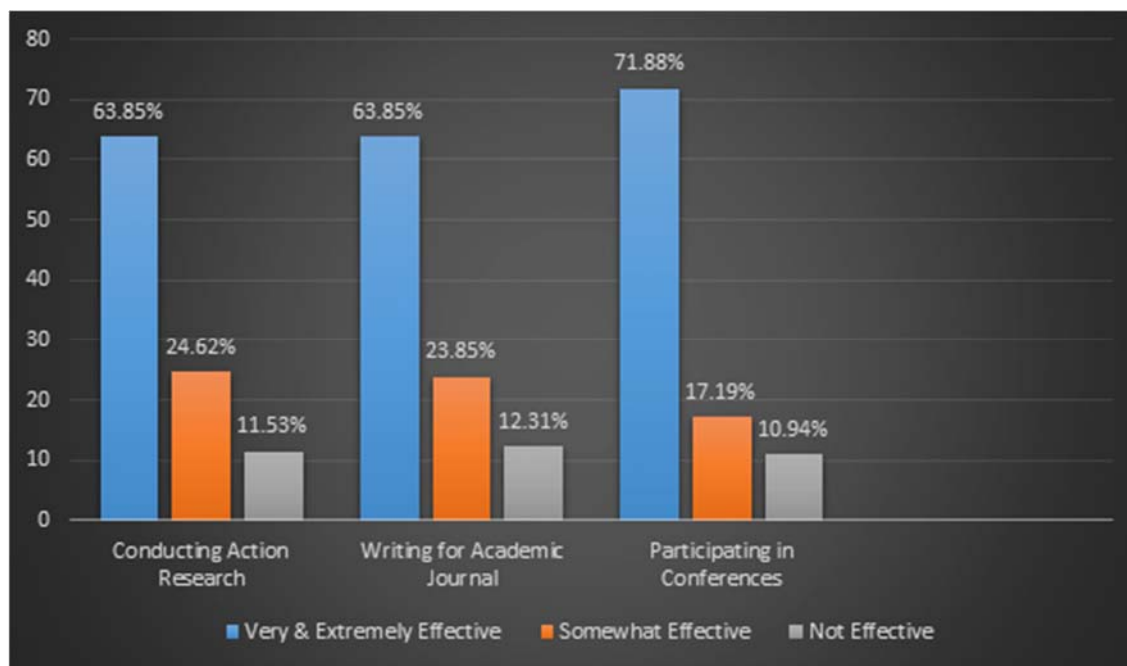


Figure 5.4 Comparison of academic activities

As previously mentioned in Chapter 3, action research can be effective in improving practice and solving contextual issues that can support staff members in developing new skills and gaining new knowledge. Based on that reasoning, a question about using action research for development and exploring participant perceptions on the subject was added to the survey.

The majority of respondents (63.85%) rated this type of learning and development as *very and extremely effective*. The qualitative data from the comments revealed that some participants were not aware of this type of research. However, the majority signalled its importance in terms of solving problems and

revealing the reasons for some of the context specific issues. The following are two example extracts of their comments:

I am not aware of the existence of such a research.

Action research helps to explore the actual problems and it is more realistic, thus, it helps to solve problems and therefore helps development and improve work.

Writing for an academic journal had a similar reaction. Although the majority of participants supported this type of learning and development (63.85%), contradictory views were offered. Most participants agreed with this approach by emphasising the importance of 'sharing knowledge' to support their professional growth and development, while others mentioned that due to their workload, this approach cannot be very effective. The following are two example extracts of their different views:

Sharing knowledge is a key part in development and professional growth.

There is no time for writing under the pressure of workload.

As presented earlier, almost three-quarters of respondents (71.88%) preferred to participate in conferences for learning and development, rating this approach as *very and extremely effective*. Some participants indicated that the opportunity to attend conferences is limited, that is, it is not available for all staff members. Others have echoed that the majority of listed conferences are not related to their educational qualifications and specific development needs. The following are two example extracts of the comments:

It is only limited for some staff, and the IPA gives priority only for giving classes and training programs.

It is effective if it is related to my scientific and training needs, but unfortunately, we sometimes participate in conferences that are not related to our development needs.

This point and other ideas is further discussed in the next chapter.

Collaborating with other colleagues was the second highest rated item on the survey. The majority of respondents (81.54%) agreed that collaboration is *very and extremely effective*. Several participants expressed that they learned extremely important information from their colleagues. This could be also seen in Question 5 where over three-quarters of participants (76.16%) rated that learning from more experienced staff members as *very and extremely effective*. Some participants reported that it helped them to minimise mistakes and gain new knowledge.

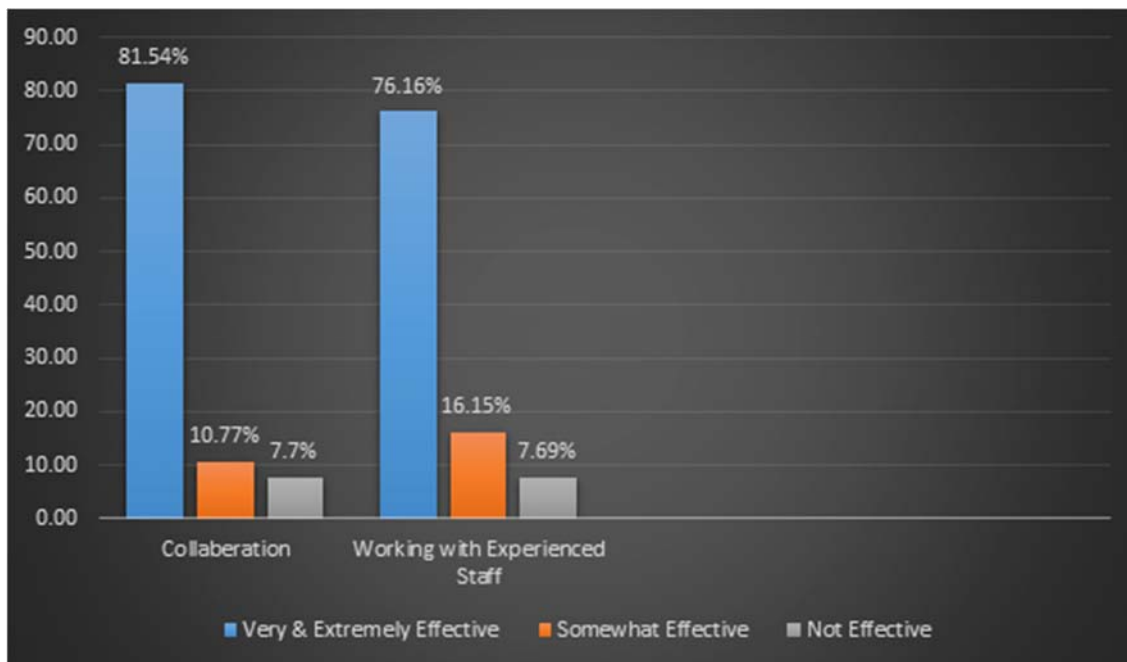


Figure 5.5 Comparison on *Collaboration* and *Working with experienced staff*

It was observed that the respondents reacted in a similar way to both questions. Most agreed that collaboration when working with other colleagues to support their professional knowledge and development is very and extremely effective.

Additionally, it is important to mention that this type of learning and development is currently occurring informally among staff members without supervision or support from management or leaders. Most of the comments praised this type of learning.

Colleagues work in the same environment. They could help each other more than an expert who is detached from the particularities of our work environment.

The interaction with other colleagues at business meetings and committees helped me understand more about the ways things are done internally and dealing with our government clients/trainees.

Although the majority supported this type of learning, there were still some contradictory comments from some participants who stated that this type of learning does not exist.

Work at the IPA is individual in nature; every trainer is responsible of a subject or a program. There is no work that demands collaboration.

Till now there is no high cooperation, may be because of the period or overlapping of job description for us.

Furthermore, appointing experienced staff members to work with less experienced staff members on professional development activities seemed to be somewhat effective, as expressed by most respondents. This type of learning and development had never been formally or informally applied at the context of this research. Many staff members (76.16%) rated it as *very and extremely effective*, with most comments highlighting the importance of *experience and knowledge transfer*, and how this approach could help to minimise mistakes, especially for new staff members.

Staff with experience are definitely important in guiding new staff. One of the ways experienced staff could help is to guide the newcomers to avoid mistakes and they could help them find the best ways to approach the work problems.

It's extremely important to transfer the experience of the experienced staff members to the fresh ones. Then you will have a pleasant blend of knowledge, and fresh ideas.

Finally, but importantly, *Working within a community of practice* (Question 12) rated the third highest type of learning and development after *Using the internet* and *Collaboration*. The majority of respondents (80.77%) rated this approach as *very and extremely effective*. Most of the comments reflected their support for this approach. Only three respondents rated it as *not effective at all*.

Activities that support sharing ideas are extremely helpful in addressing the very problems an employee face every day.

To be on the top of the game! Meeting those who share the same interest and discussing current issues or developments in the field at hand will definitely have a positive impact on my professional career.

The least preferred approach for professional development was the use of managers or leaders to teach staff members about opportunities to support their professional development (Question 11). Most of the comments under this question were not supportive and participants did not embrace the idea of directly instructing them about their professional development needs. Other participants did not comprehend the clear role that leaders can or could have in supporting their professional development. The following are example extracts of their different comments:

Managers do not necessarily have all the knowledge.

The managers want you to do your lectures and there is no time for development at all.

Unfortunately, the direct managers need to improve their knowledge to deal and improve their subordinates' opportunities cause they are busy with their own opportunities.

All these views and other presented ideas in this section are further discussed in the next chapter.

The last item on the survey (Question 13) was included to obtain a general view of the participants' perceptions that would help explore how satisfied they felt about the professional development opportunities offered to them by IPA management, which also addresses the first research question. The following pie-chart (Figure 5.6) shows the percentage distribution of the responses.

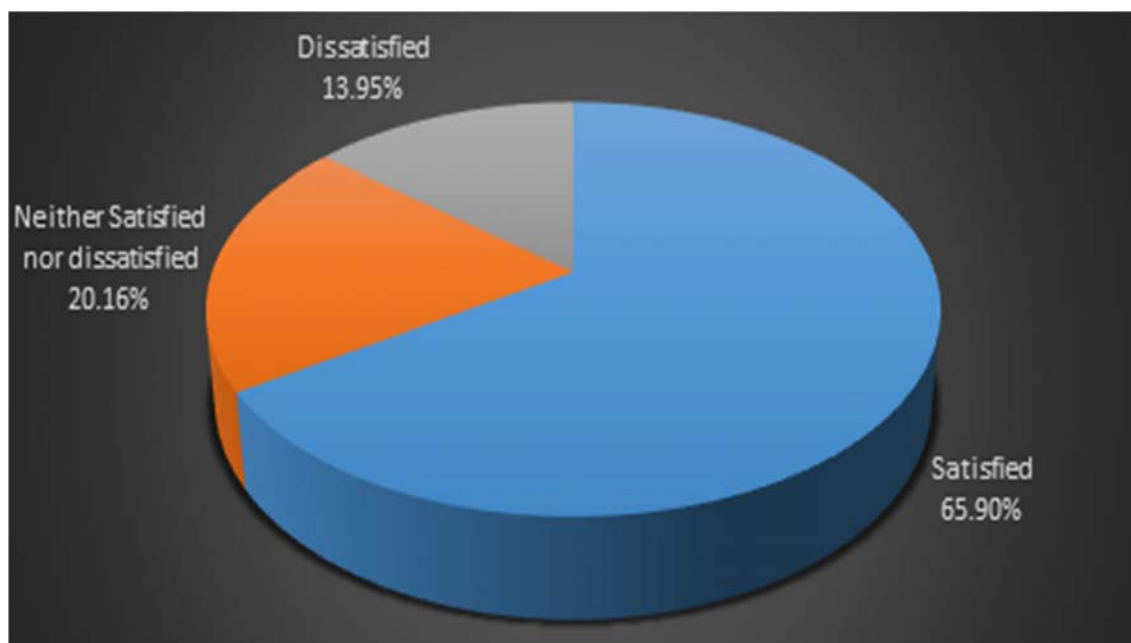


Figure 5.6 Percentage distribution of responses

Most participants seemed to be satisfied with the professional development opportunities offered to them by IPA top management, however, some stressed the importance of involving staff members to meet their needs. Other participants suggested more flexibility was required in annual abroad training programs, and for them to be open throughout the year, allowing employees to choose their preferred times and programs instead of offering them only during the summer months. A

number of participants proposed the need for management guidance and support.

The following are example extracts of their comments:

The IPA could provide professional development. However, employees need to be involved in training programs and other professional development programs that address their unique problems.

The IPA needs to become flexible in sending staff members to get training any time of the year not only in summer.

As mentioned before, I personally feel that, as a staff member of the ELC, I think we are overlooked as we are not given the same opportunity to enhance our skills like other faculty members from different departments. I think English language staff are marginalized.

The last extract above articulates a similar view to how English language staff members have repeatedly expressed in the survey. Through analysing the qualitative data from the comments, English language staff members have expressed their opinions that they are not given the same professional development opportunities as other sectors or departments by IPA management or HRD management. Refer to Chapter 6 – Discussion.

To sum up, *Using the internet for professional development* was the highest rated item in the survey. It is worth noting that *Using social media for professional development* was not rated in the same way, although it could be categorised as the same type of tool or activity. In fact, most participants thought that social media is solely used for fun and entertainment; others thought that the information on social media cannot be trusted.

Another point worth considering is how participants reacted to Questions 2 and 3. The majority of participants seemed doubtful about the effectiveness of locally tailored and offered training programs. We were able to observe a much higher

agreement on the abroad training programs, with the majority of participants thinking it is an extremely effective approach in supporting their professional development.

Additionally, participants offered almost identical responses to Questions 6, 7 and 8. We were able to note that action research seems to be a somewhat effective approach, possibly due to its direct impact on local practice and issues, as reported by some of the participants. Many echoed that writing for academic papers and participating in conferences were not their preferred option or approach.

Collaboration with other colleagues, however, was the second highest rated item on the survey. Several participants expressed that they have gained the most important information from their colleagues. This could be also seen in Question 5 where most of the participants believed that learning from more experienced staff members is an extremely effective approach. Some participants reported that it helped them to minimise mistakes and gain new knowledge.

Finally, *Working within a community of practice* (Question 12) was the third highest rated type of learning and development after *Using the internet* and *Collaboration*. The least preferred approach was *Using managers to teach staff members about opportunities to support their professional development* (Question 11). Most of the comments under Question 11 were not supportive and participants did not embrace the idea of directly instructing subordinates about their professional development needs.

5.2 Findings from semi-structured interviews

As presented in Chapter 4, the scope of the research questions needed different research methods to garner in-depth data. Each research tool has its advantages and disadvantages (refer to Sections 4.4 and 4.4.2 for further details). As mentioned

in the previous section, the survey link was sent via email to prospective participants, which included the survey asking for volunteers to participate in the interviews (refer to Section 4.5 for further details). Twenty interviews consisting of 12 faculty members and eight leaders were conducted.

The overall findings obtained from the 20 semi-structured interviews were able to clarify several main dimensions in their context. These dimensions, based on uncovering the participants' experiences of professional development, reflected key areas explored in the interviews in line with the research questions (as shown in Section 4.1.1). Figure 5.7 illustrates the main dimensions based on exploring participant perceptions and experiences of professional development, showing how they all connected.

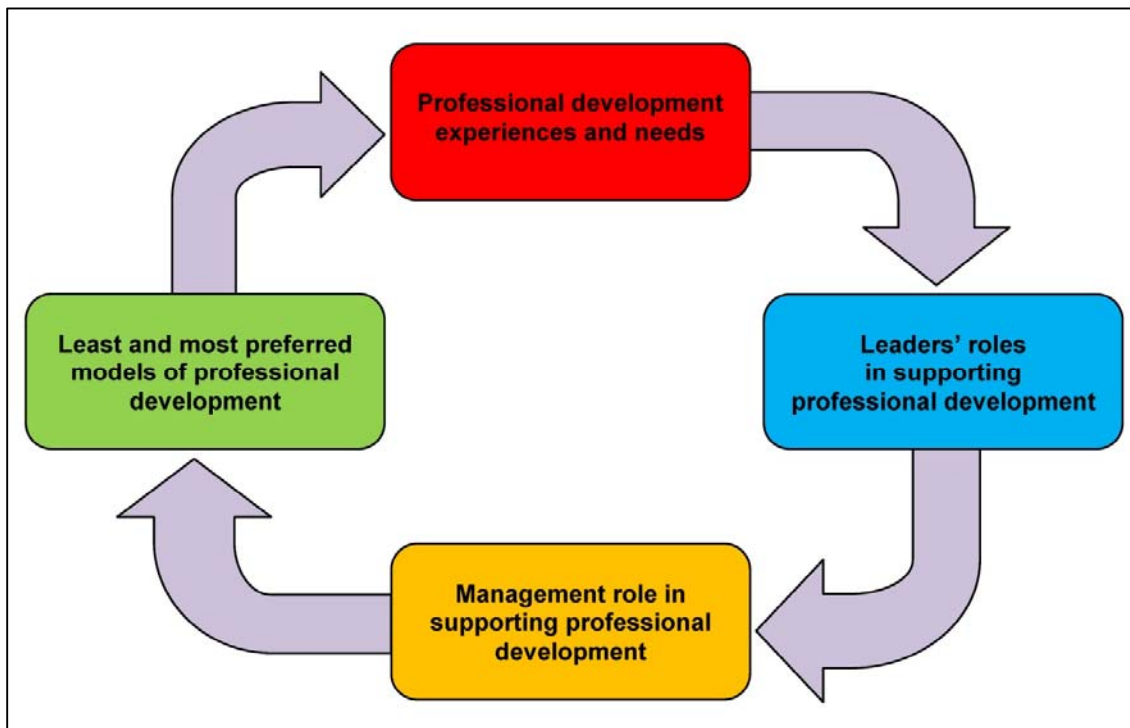


Figure 5.7 Dimensions of participant experiences of professional development

Four dimensions covered the topics: (i) perceptions regarding their professional development needs and experiences; (ii) leaders' roles in supporting professional development; (iii) management's role in supporting professional development; and (iv) least/most preferred models or approaches of professional development. In each dimension, key themes identified from the analysis of the data are presented and illustrated in separate tables with extracts from participants' interviews. All key themes are presented in separate tables and sections to help understand the data and to highlight the links between the themes. Table 5.1 illustrates the identified key themes.

Table 5.1 Key themes of dimensions

Professional development experiences and needs	Leaders' roles in supporting professional development	Top management's role in supporting professional development	Least/most preferred models of professional development
1 Irrelevant professional development programs 2 Lack of staff member's and leaders' voices 3 Workload impact on professional development 4 Lack of collaboration 5 Absence of practical training 6 Preparing new leaders	1 Absence of leaders' roles 2 Identifying weakness and professional development needs 3 Importance of leaders' voices 4 Lack of communication with leaders 5 Creating a positive environment for professional development	1 Professional development needs analysis 2 Expanding online professional development opportunities 3 Supporting knowledge transfer	1 Using the internet vs social media 2 Collaboration 3 Community of practice 4 Abroad vs locally based programs 5 Writing for academic journals

In this chapter, each dimension is presented in a separate section with key themes identified from the analysis of the data; this supports the understanding to what extent the participants considered their experiences of professional development to

meet their needs, and to explore if any differences existed between staff members and leaders' perceptions regarding the provision of professional development.

The first research question addressed the following: *To what extent do staff members of the IPA consider their experiences of professional development to meet their needs?* To understand the participants' professional development experiences and needs, the research initially attempted to set the scene by asking the participants about the importance of professional development to them.

To obtain participants' initial perceptions of their professional development experiences and needs, they were asked about the importance of professional development to them. Staff members and leaders were asked the same question, all of whom agreed that professional development is very important for their practices, professional skills and knowledge development. The following are example extracts of their responses:

Example extracts from staff members' responses

It is very important to develop my skills and knowledge to face and adapt with the fast-growing changes these days. It is to be up to date. (Staff Member-4)

It is very important, because I need new skills to improve my performance and to gain more knowledge and it helps me to become a better trainer. (Staff Member-5)

I think it is very important. It adds to my knowledge and skills. As an IPA staff member, it helps me to meet the demands of my work in training, research and consultation and all these fields require continuous and consistent professional development. (Staff Member-9)

Example extracts from leaders' responses

It is very important for me to be up to date, trying to apply new things and trends in my context to develop myself and my practices. (Leader-4)

I think it is very important. I think it is very important to enrich our skills and experiences and to improve my practice and performance. I think you cannot keep doing the same thing you do for 20 years that is why I see professional development as a main pillar for any career. (Leader-2)

As observed from the above extracts, professional development appears to be very important for both staff members and leaders. They believe that it is especially important to be kept up-to-date with their professional development; to be provided with new knowledge and skills, and to be aware of new changes and developments in their fields.

However, two leaders had conflicting views as Leader-3 indicated that professional development is more important for leaders while Leader-5 stated that it is more important for staff members. The following are direct extracts of their responses:

I think professional development is also more important for leaders because they need to update themselves with new techniques to motivate their staff members. (Leader-3)

It is extremely important. It is even more important for my staff members, because if I have a very well-trained team, I can forget about my own personal professional development. Based on my 22 years of experience I think it is more important to have a well-trained staff. (Leader-5)

From the two extracts that present different views and perceptions in this research, Leader-3 believes that professional development is more important for leaders because they need to be equipped with strategies to help them motivate their staff members and support their professional development.

On the other hand, Leader-5 believes that professional development is more important for staff members, even more so than leaders' professional development. As presented earlier, staff members echoed that professional development is

important for them to meet the changing demands of their fields and to become better trainers and researchers. Leaders have stressed the same thoughts and views about the importance of professional development for themselves and their staff members.

5.2.1 *Unfolding staff members' and leaders' professional development experiences and needs*

To address the first research question, all participants were asked: *To what extent do the current and previous professional development opportunities offered to them by the IPA management meet their needs?* followed by: *What recommendations can they give to support and improve the professional development of IPA staff members?*

Staff members and leaders echoed almost similar thoughts and concerns regarding the provision for professional development and their professional development needs, except that some leaders stressed the need for preparing new leaders and managers when they take up their new role. The data revealed that staff members and leaders share the same vision, concerns and perceptions regarding the provision for professional development. Six major themes were identified through analysing the participants' responses:

1. Irrelevant professional development programs.
2. Lack of staff members' and leaders' voices.
3. Workload impact on professional development.
4. Lack of collaboration.
5. Absence of practical training.
6. Preparing new leaders.

The majority of participants reported that most of the professional development opportunities offered to them by IPA management do not meet their specific professional development needs; this matched what was found in the survey data presented earlier in this chapter.

Additionally, some leaders stressed the need for preparing new managers and leaders when they take up their new positions prior to assigning them with new tasks. The majority of the participants indicated that most current professional development opportunities and programs are irrelevant to their specific professional development needs.

Table 5.2 Example extracts of participant responses

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
Irrelevant professional development programs	<p>Staff members</p> <p>The current training programs are within the main IPA agendas and activities and they are not relevant to my field and major of language learning and teaching. (Staff Member-1)</p> <p>I think professional development opportunities should be divided into two sections; one is relevant to the IPA needs or the organization needs and the other related to my major. (Staff Member-7)</p> <p>Leaders</p> <p>I would say that I do not need general training programs such in consultations and research studies. What we need is a customized training or professional development programs that would meet our professional development needs. I need training or professional development opportunities in very specific fields that I need to improve my practice such as organizational structures and regulations. (Leader-1).</p> <p>I think we need training programs tailored to our specific professional development needs. The current professional development opportunities cover our needs generally, but we need more specific programs. I think the IPA management needs to look for our specific professional development needs. (Leader-7)</p>	9

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
Preparing new leaders	<p>Leaders</p> <p>I think the IPA management should prepare and train new managers or leaders before they assign them to be responsible and give them time to prepare for their new tasks. The transition from a staff member to a leader needs a preparation and the IPA management needs to train their leaders before assigning the new tasks for them. (Leader-5)</p> <p>Preparing new leaders and managers prior assigning them for their new positions. In some cases, I had to consult my secretary to know what the right thing is to do. we need to train new leaders for two months before they take on their new position. I felt very embarrassed to ask the previous manager how they did this and that. (Leader-8)</p>	5

As noted in the above extracts, the majority of participants were not satisfied with the professional development opportunities offered to them by IPA management. Most participants demonstrated that they needed more professional development programs directed towards their majors and specific needs. This could be different from what was found in the survey data where most of the participants (65.9%) were satisfied with the opportunities of professional development being offered. However, from the comments under the same survey item, other perceptions and views matched what was presented in the above table. For further details, refer to the last survey item (Question 13). These contradictory findings are discussed in the next chapter.

Furthermore, the following extract explains another relevant issue whereby the participant indicated the importance of allocating different professional development programs for experienced and new staff members. Staff Member-4 mentioned that the current and previous professional development programs and opportunities do

not meet his needs. The participant also stressed that he is way beyond the currently offered professional development programs and opportunities, stating that there should be different professional development programs for new and experienced staff members.

Since 10 years I have not received any training programs in my major. For example, last year, I had a training program in consultation skills which is irrelevant now, I have been working for 25 years now and I think I need this program at an earlier stage in my career, before this I took a program in determining training needs. I should have undertaken them in my first five years of service or career. It is very strange that the human resource development management is asking me to take professional development courses in consultation skills and training needs analysis after 25 years of service. I think we need to have different packages of professional development especially designed for new and experienced staff members. (Staff Member-4)

Another statement worth considering emanates from Leader-2, who stressed that there are few professional development opportunities for English language staff members; this observation matched some of the comments found in the survey data, as clearly verified in the following extract:

The choices offered for us every summer are useful for some majors, but they are not relevant to other departments or sectors professional development needs. Why do I need a course in Consultations skills if I am not going to participate in this activity when I come back? The current professional development programs and opportunities do not meet our needs. (Leader-2)

Leader-2 further stated that IPA management should pay more attention to the professional development needs of English language staff members:

As an ELC staff member, I think there is a weak focus and we need more attention from the IPA management to take care of our professional development needs. (Leader-2)

One of the most recurring themes across the data is *Lack of staff members' and leaders' voices*, resulting in most participants reporting that they only want IPA management to listen to them in terms of determining their professional development needs; this finding also match a number of survey comments.

Table 5.3 Example responses on *Lack of staff members' and leaders' voices*

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
Lack of staff members' and leaders' voices	<p>Staff members</p> <p>I think it is very important to consider my needs and engage me to find out about my professional development needs. You could simply ask the employees or staff members about their professional development needs. (Staff Member-6)</p> <p>I think the IPA management need to listen to staff members about their professional development needs. Many decisions are made from higher levels without listening from us. I think that they should at least survey us about our professional development needs prior making decisions about our professional development programs. (Staff Member-8)</p> <p>Leaders</p> <p>I think they must listen to us to meet our professional development needs. I just need them to ask me about my professional development needs. (Leader-4)</p> <p>I think they need to contact us about our professional development needs. I think they need to listen to our suggestions and ideas for development. (Leader-6)</p>	15

Some participants suggested surveying staff members prior to making any decisions regarding their professional development needs and programs. Others suggested that IPA management should at least contact departments heads and leaders about their staff members' professional development needs. Several participants proposed activating the role of permanent committees in sectors to take part in specifying the professional development needs for each department, sector or major.

Another major theme that stood out of the data was the *Lack of collaboration*. All staff members were asked if other colleagues had shared what they learnt from their professional development experiences. A similar question was posed to leaders, but changed to other leaders having shared with them what they had learned from their professional development experiences. Eleven out of 20 participants replied with a firm “No”. Some participants stated that there was no time to collaborate, while others proposed a platform for sharing experiences.

Table 5.4 Example responses on *Lack of collaboration*

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
Lack of collaboration	<p>Staff members</p> <p>No. I think we need more time to collaborate with each other or other staff members in other departments. Our job description is solitary in nature and does not allow us to share or collaborate with other staff members. (Staff Member-3)</p> <p>No, actually we do not have a platform to share our ideas with our colleagues. Sometimes, I ask my colleagues if I needed any information before I deliver my training programs. (Staff Member-7)</p> <p>Leaders</p> <p>No, because our majors are different. (Leader-3)</p> <p>No, we did not share our own professional development experiences with other leaders. Sometimes, we talk about our annual training summer programs. (Leader-4)</p>	11

The data also revealed that collaboration among staff members is more active in departments and sectors where there is little practical training. This may explain why collaboration was rated the second highest theme as an effective approach or model for professional development. For instance, accounting, computer science, statistics, health administration, and information management staff members sometimes share knowledge about their field of expertise and training programs that they are expected

to present to government employees and clients because it is a helpful way of gaining new, useful knowledge and skills for their practice. The following are example extracts of their responses:

I share with them what I learn from different resources all the time. Also, my colleagues share with me what they have learned from other resources. In our occasional meetings when someone talks about a subject, we discuss it together and share our experiences and knowledge. I think collaboration with my colleagues has a direct impact on my professional skills and knowledge. (Staff Member-5)

I think without my colleagues' feedback, my performance in the training programs would not be as what I have expected. They really helped me to perform better in the classroom. As far as I remember, before every training program I am supposed to deliver, I have sat down with one of my colleagues to discuss with them what I was supposed to do and avoid doing and what is the best way to deliver this training pack for my trainees. (Staff Member-7)

Yes, we always talk together about new trends in our major, and I think this is one of the best sources for me to learn and develop. Discussions in our break times with each other is a very valuable source of information and I learn a lot from it. I remember I told my colleagues about a training course in block chain technology. (Staff Member-8)

The *Workload impact on professional development* is another major theme that stood out of the data that many participants raised as one of the reasons for the lack of collaboration. Some participants reported being too busy to collaborate or share their experiences due to their heavy workload, Nine out of 20 participants clarified the impact of workload on their professional development experiences. Table 5.5 presents example extracts of their responses:

Table 5.5 Example responses of *Workload impact on professional development*

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
Workload impact on professional development	<p>Staff members</p> <p>We are very busy with the workload and there is no time to share experiences. Our main concerns are to meet deadlines in our training and classes. The main concern is to get the job done. (Staff Member-3)</p> <p>It could be a good idea to minimize the staff members load to help them find more time for professional development. (Staff Member-9)</p> <p>Leaders</p> <p>For my work, time is very limited and cannot do anything to support my professional development. I barely have time to do my work. For my major, I cannot find any opportunities to support my professional development. (Leader-2)</p> <p>I think it is less important for staff members because they are busy with their workload. (Leader-3).</p>	9

Some participants stated that they found difficulty in meeting deadlines due to their demanding workload, while others suggested reducing the workload to allow more time for professional development. Staff member-10 highlighted another relevant issue to the theme, *Workload impact on professional development*:

I think that the workload has a direct impact on our opportunities for professional development, because the leader does not want to do extra work to reassign the lectures and training programs accordingly with these professional development opportunities. (Staff Member-10)

This participant stated that due to the heavy workload, leaders were unwilling to reschedule their lectures or make an extra effort to help staff members seek further opportunities for professional development. He explained about his personal experience, that he missed several opportunities to present conference papers due

to his heavy workload and his leader was unwilling to reassign or reschedule his lectures and training programs:

My staff members are very busy with their workload and I could not find time to think about their professional development. I focused more on getting the job done and for my staff members to conduct their lectures and government training programs successfully. (Leader-1)

The leader seemed to be more concerned about daily work obligations and tasks, and stated that his staff members were very busy with daily lectures and classes. He also seemed keen to meet the imposed agendas and standards from management.

One prevailing theme within the data is the *Absence of practical training*. This is relevant to what is illustrated above (*Lack of collaboration*). A considerable number of participants have relied on gaining up-to-date professional knowledge and skills from their colleagues due to the lack of practical training and relevant professional development programs towards their specific needs and demands. Table 5.6 presents example extracts of their responses.

Table 5.6 Example responses of *Absence of practical training*

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
Absence of practical training	<p>Staff members</p> <p>I think that IPA staff members need to be exposed to other local settings and work closely with other government organizations in order for them to provide better training and professional development programs. I think it is very important to develop skills more than exposing employees to new theoretical framework of practice. (Staff Member-3)</p> <p>I think that theoretical learning lacks practice, and many training programs are about learning and acquiring new knowledge, but it is far away from the actual practice in the context. (Staff Member-12)</p>	12

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
	<p>Leaders</p> <p>we need practical training programs based on work demands and staff members' needs. (Leader-6)</p> <p>I think what we miss is the exposure for other training cultures. To give tours and visits for other global training agencies that do the same activity as the IPA. (Leader-7)</p>	

As can be observed, some participants suggested allowing and providing opportunities for staff members to work with other local private and government organisations to obtain a full picture of local professional development needs and issues that they consider to be the most effective way for self-development and improvement; it is about the ability to deliver better training programs. Also, other participants echoed that the most enriching experience is to be allowed to work closely with local contexts to gain knowledge and to sharpen the skills that are necessary for improved practice.

The following extracts are examples of further responses:

I think there should be professional development training that could be a mix between the practical and the academic parts or sides guided towards accounting staff members. I do not want them to lecture me only, I want to see and live the practical part of my major, I want to live the reality and the practical part of my field. There are some very specific details in accounting that our trainees live, and we do not get to experience them. For example, one time, I had the chance to look at some of the work that has been done by General Auditing Bureau for Assfan Municipality, and I have seen many small details that I am not aware of although I am supposed to deliver for them professional development programs in the field. (Staff Member-2)

Providing chances for staff members to work for other organizations in the country who they are responsible of their professional development. Give me the chance to work for private organizations and companies for a period to help develop my own organization. (Staff Member-9)

This may indicate that some majors, departments or sectors need a different and more practical form of professional development program. At the same time, this matches the findings presented above, which also add to the first theme, *Irrelevant professional development programs*, regarding the understanding of participants' professional development needs and experiences.

5.2.2 Exploring leaders' roles in supporting professional development

To obtain a wider vision of participants' professional development experiences and needs, and to fully address the research questions, all staff members were asked to describe their leaders' role in supporting their professional development. They were also asked what their leaders do to support and improve their professional development. Similarly, leaders were asked to describe their role in supporting professional development among their staff members. They were also asked about how they support their staff members' professional development.

The leader's role is about her/his position and functionality within the system of professional development. What kind of roles leaders play or could play in supporting their staff members' professional learning and development. On the other hand, how leaders support their staff members' professional development, as opposed to the institution's professional development system, also needs to be identified. In this section, unlike leaders, most staff member responses were speculative about their leaders' roles and what their leaders should do to support their professional development, rather than describing their own experiences.

Five major themes were revealed through analysing participant responses:

1. Absence of leaders' roles.
2. Identifying weakness and professional development needs.

3. Importance of leaders' voices.
4. Lack of communication with leaders.
5. Creating a positive environment for professional development.

Eight staff members responded by stating that their leaders do “nothing” to support their professional development; this indicates the absence of the leadership role in supporting staff members' professional development.

As reported by most staff members, their leaders' roles are passive; they basically watch them arrive on time and do their lectures (Table 5.7).

Table 5.7 Example responses of *Absence of leaders' roles*

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
Absence of leaders' roles	<p>Nothing. They just watch me to attend my lectures on time and to submit my grades on time. (Staff Member-3)</p> <p>He does not have any role. His role is completely absent. He does not know about your training needs and he does not know about anything in my major. He does not know what training programs I take every year. (Staff Member-4)</p> <p>My leader role is secretarial basically, there is nothing he can do. My leader did nothing for me in terms of supporting my professional development and his role is absent. (Staff Member-10)</p>	8

Furthermore, some staff members perceived the *absence of their leaders' roles* in supporting their professional development to be due to their busy workload supervising several departments and sectors. This is explained further in the following extract:

Our leader is supervising many departments and he does not have time to support our professional development. I think we need to have staff members who are only responsible for our professional development.

Even in the job description of my leader does not state support the professional development of staff members. (Staff Member-8)

Staff Member-8 suggested assigning staff members who are only concerned with meeting professional development needs. This probably means giving more attention to specific professional development needs of staff members by allowing them extra time for other staff members to discuss those needs. Further details about this point is discussed in the next chapter. The researcher of this thesis was given the opportunity to review job descriptions of IPA leaders and managers; the documents did not mention the task of supporting or taking care of staff members' professional development needs, whether directly or indirectly.

Other staff members perceived their leaders' roles was to identify their weakness and address their professional development needs. As mentioned earlier, to fully explore and understand how participants perceived their leaders' roles, all staff members were asked about whether their leaders supported their professional development, and if they thought there was no role at all, as stated by most of the participants. The question asked was: *What they think their leaders should do to support their professional development?* Unlike the leaders, staff members' put forward abstract responses about what leaders should do, rather than a description of their own experiences.

The majority of staff members stressed that leaders should be responsible for informing staff members about any of their weak attributes, and to address their professional development needs. At the same time, most leaders reported that their role is based on identifying their staff members' weaknesses and professional development needs, as well as suggesting suitable professional development programs; this matched the findings from analysing staff members' responses

regarding their leaders' roles in supporting their professional development (Table 5.8).

Table 5.8 Example responses of *Identifying weakness and professional development needs*

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
Identifying weakness and professional development needs	<p>Staff Members</p> <p>I think leaders should support their staff members to find out about professional development opportunities in their fields, and they should look for and consider their staff members' professional development needs and to find out their weaknesses. (Staff Member-1)</p> <p>I think the leader role is centred around finding out my weak sides and to find out about my professional development needs. (Staff Member-6)</p> <p>Leaders</p> <p>I think as a leader I need to be aware of their interests, needs, and performances. My role is suggesting training programs that would help them to perform better and expand their horizons. (Leader-5)</p> <p>The leader role is to open their staff members' eyes towards their strong and weak sides and what they need to develop. It is to give staff members opportunities to develop. It is to be close and to have a vision and the skills to locate his or her staff members' weakness and strong sides. It is to observe their performance and notice what they need. (Leader-7)</p>	12

Some staff members further elaborated on their leaders' role in supporting their professional development from similar angles. For instance, Staff Member-4 expressed that leaders are expected to possess a wide experience of knowledge and skills required to support professional development, and to be aware of their staff members' professional development needs. Leaders should play a role in choosing suitable training programs, especially for newly hired staff members.

I think the leader could specify the types of training programs needed for his staff members, and the types of programs needed for newly hired staff

members. I think the leader should have a wide experience in the relevant field. Leaders should be aware of the type of knowledge and skills needed for their staff members' professional growth and development. (Staff Member-4)

Additionally, Staff Member-5 stated that leaders need a plan that supports their staff members' professional development, "The leader should have a clear plan to develop his staff members".

Furthermore, Staff Member-7 reported that he wants leaders to listen to staff members, which can be achieved by conducting regular meetings where problems faced in their everyday work can be tackled. The theme, *Lack of staff members' and leaders' voices* is presented earlier in this chapter.

I think the leader role is very important. I think they need to pay more attention towards my professional development needs and conduct regular meetings to listen to my feedback and the problems I face regarding the trainers and the training packs I am using to train my government trainees. (Staff Member-7)

This point leads to one of the most recurring themes revealed within the data, that is, *Importance of leaders' voices*. A considerable number of staff members thought that their leaders should be their voice or representative when dealing with IPA higher administration or management. At the same time, a number of leaders stressed the importance of their voices to be heard regarding the support of professional development for their staff members, which also matched the data obtained from staff members regarding their perceptions of their leaders' role in supporting their professional development. Table 5.9 presents example extracts of participant responses that could also be linked to another theme, *Lack of staff members and leaders' voices*, as presented in Section 5.2.1.

Table 5.9 Example responses of *Importance of leaders' voices*

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
Importance of leaders' voices	<p>Staff members</p> <p>I think the leader should be our voice to the higher administration to convey our professional development needs. The leader might play a significant role in meeting the professional development demands and needs of staff members. (Staff Member-1)</p> <p>The leader is our voice and link to the IPA management. I think leaders should deliver our professional development needs to the IPA management. (Staff Member-6)</p> <p>Leaders</p> <p>My role is very important; we need the IPA management to involve leaders in the decision making for choosing the right professional development programs for our staff members. (Leader-1).</p> <p>My role is to be the link between my staff members and the IPA management, for example, if they suggest for me a training program that they want to attend, I would contact the higher administration to get them approval. (Leader-4)</p>	12

Overall, most staff members reported that their leaders should be the link between them and IPA management, when conveying their issues, problems, concerns and professional development needs. Again, most staff members' responses were abstract when they spoke about what their leaders should do, rather than providing a description of their own experiences.

Unlike staff members, most leaders presented similar but more relevant views of their actual experiences when they were asked about their role in supporting professional development among their staff members. For instance, Leader-1 expressed limitation and constraint in his role:

My role is very limited and constrained; everything about staff development comes from the HRD management. (Leader-1)

Leader-5 stressed the importance of involving leaders to decide his staff members' professional development needs:

The IPA management should give leaders more authority to decide upon their staff members professional development needs. (Leader-5)

In addition, Leader-4 believed that the leader's role is to encourage staff members to develop work practices and to make them feel that their opinions are important to improving their practice. At the same time, it is about listening to them about what they need to support their professional development:

The leader role is based on encouraging his staff members once he hears a good idea from them and encourage them to develop work practices. The leader needs to let his staff members feel that their voices are important to develop practice and to develop themselves. I think it is very important to listen to my employees' opinions about practice and professional development opportunities as well. (Leader-4)

Moreover, Leader-6 stressed the importance of transparency through informing staff members about new procedures and what is expected from them to perform better, as well as providing new staff members with the opportunity to experience all work practices instead of only relying on experienced staff members:

First, transparency, when I decide upon a new procedure everyone must be aware of it. I usually email all my staff about what is expected from them to perform better. I think my role is very important with new employees and I give them all the chances to experience all the different training programs we offer for our clients and government employees and give them the chance to present and deliver them instead of only relying on the experienced staff members. (Leader-6)

Leader-6 further stated that it is important to encourage and support less motivated staff members and to encourage experienced staff members to share their experiences with those less experienced in order to encourage collaboration and

help improve practice, as well as to provide the opportunity for new staff members to develop their training materials. Furthermore, an equal opportunity for all staff members to participate in committees and training program design or other group activities should be encouraged:

Giving opportunities for new staff members to help develop new training materials and this helps to give a background about what we do in our department. Providing an equal opportunity for all staff members to participate in all committees and training programs design or group work. I also allow staff members to share experiences, for instance, staff members who have just come back with an MA degree and staff members who have obtained their MA degrees 15 years ago. This encourages staff members to collaborate and help improve practice. (Leader-6)

Leader-7 reported that empowering staff members and exploring their potentials are fundamental to helping them develop professionally. The leader further emphasised that it is equally important to provide opportunities for new staff members to work on and for them to participate in the design of new training materials; this comment matches the perspective of Leader-6 presented above. Leader-7 stated that it is very important to assign new tasks for new staff members and to give them the opportunity to observe classes to help them gain new experiences and develop professionally:

To explore staff members' potentials and empower them. To give the chance for new staff members to watch and participate in advanced training courses for government leaders and to learn new things about delivering those programs. Another point, when new tasks come up such as developing training materials, we used to assign experienced staff members for this task and new staff members to review it. My role is based on enabling new staff members to develop themselves. I gave the opportunity for new staff members to observe training programs and learn from them. (Leader-7)

Another perspective came from Leader-8 who stated that he shares his knowledge and any information he comes across with his staff members to help them develop professionally. He further elaborated that he is always keen to make himself available for any questions or concerns:

I always share with my staff members what I come across especially if it is relevant to their tasks. My office is always open if they need any help or consultations. (Leader-8)

Notably, most of the leaders stated that they had never shared information on new trends and knowledge in their fields with their staff members, but basically focused on getting the job done without any problems. During the interviews, I asked leaders if they have ever shared new knowledge, such as research articles, reports, websites, online links or books with their staff members; all answered a resounding “No”. According to his statement, Leader-8 was the only participant who shared new knowledge with his staff members.

As presented above, the findings illustrate a consensus that leaders should play a more active role in supporting their staff members’ professional development and improving work practices. IPA top management should play a more active role in authorising leaders and managers to support their staff members professional development needs, as observed in the following extract:

I think that leaders play a very important role in being our voice to the IPA management; informing them about our professional development needs and how to improve work practices. I think it would be a good idea for leaders to allow staff members to send emails every now and then regarding observations related to their daily work practices. (Staff Member-7)

Similar to other staff members, Staff member-7 stressed that leaders should be responsible for improving work practices and to determine their professional development needs, as well as to open channels of communication with staff members. Another prominent theme within the data, *Lack of communication with leaders* is displayed in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10 Example responses of *Lack of communication with leaders*

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
Lack of communication with leaders	<p>There is no communication between me and my leader, the only way of communicating is through the head department even when there is a problem. (Staff Member-2)</p> <p>Me, as an IPA staff member if I do not receive any feedback or encouragement from my direct managers, I will lose interest and I will become like a machine that it is supposed to get the job done only. (Staff Member-3)</p> <p>There is no contact. I think my leader does not have time to communicate with the large number of staff members. (Staff Member-8)</p>	6

Many participants pointed out that their voices are not being heard by their leaders and the lack of communication with them is negatively impacting their professional development experiences. Therefore, it is not surprising that the lack of communication appeared in the responses of six out of 12 staff members. Other participants reported that their leaders should be responsible for solving their daily work problems, as seen in the following quote:

My leader is supposed to solve my problems and take care of my professional development needs. I think leaders should take the initiatives to ask about what their staff members need to improve their practice. Sometimes I am a bit hesitant to share what I face in my classroom, but leaders could make me feel comfortable to share with them my issues. In some cases, I decided to hide the kind of problems I face in my classroom. Leaders could make regular meetings to hear from their staff members

and encourage them to share what they face in the classroom. (Staff Member-7)

Staff Member-7 stressed the need for making staff members feel comfortable to share their issues and concerns with their leaders, which could possibly be achieved if the leader created a positive environment for his staff members to feel comfortable with sharing their needs and concerns. This again emphasises the lack of communication between leaders and their staff members.

Table 5.11 Example responses of *Creating a positive environment for professional development*

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
Creating a positive environment for professional development	<p>The leader has a very important role in encouraging his employees to develop professionally. The leader plays a very important role in encouraging his employees to take courses in certain fields to improve practice. (Staff Member-1)</p> <p>I think leaders can make a soul to encourage learning and development. I think leaders can create passion for staff members to develop and improve themselves as trainers who work for a professional development organization. (Staff member-3)</p> <p>I think that the leader must provide a positive environment for staff members to interact with each other and to provide the opportunities for them to participate in conferences and training programs and to share the local community their knowledge and experience. (Staff Member-5)</p>	5

Other staff members reported several instances where leaders should create a healthy and positive environment that supports professional development (Table 5.11).

It is undeniable that leaders could play major role in creating a comfortable and positive environment for staff members that encourages and supports professional development in a variety of ways. As can be observed from the above

example extracts, several participants echoed that leaders could motivate their staff members and encourage them to play a more active role in improving work practices and creating a positive environment to address their professional development needs.

5.2.3 Discovering the management role in supporting professional development

In this section, I grouped the findings of staff members' and leaders' perceptions regarding the top IPA management role in supporting professional development. To obtain a broader and more detailed vision, all participants were asked to comment on how IPA management can support professional development. Three major themes emanated from the responses:

1. Conducting professional development needs analysis.
2. Expanding online professional development opportunities.
3. Supporting knowledge transfer.

Some participants stressed that conducting, supporting and improving professional development needs analysis should be a part of the IPA management's role.

Other participants suggested the need to conduct regular meetings, or at least survey staff members to gain a better understanding of their professional development needs (Table 5.12).

Table 5.12 Example responses of *Need for conducting professional development needs analysis*

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
Need for conducting professional development needs analysis	<p>Staff members</p> <p>The HRD should conduct professional development needs analysis to find out about staff members professional development needs. (Staff Member-4).</p> <p>I think that they should at least survey us about our professional development needs prior making decisions about our professional development programs. (Staff Member-8)</p> <p>Leaders</p> <p>To conduct a training needs analysis and development plan. I think that the nature of work and tasks are consistently changing, and we need to meet them through up to date professional development programs. (Leader-4)</p> <p>I think they must conduct a training needs analysis and development plan based on the skills and merits of staff members. (Leader-5)</p>	9

As seen from the example extracts in Table 5.12, some participants proposed the *Need for conducting a training needs analysis* prior to making any decisions regarding professional development programs of staff members and leaders. This theme is also associated with another theme, *Importance of leaders' voices*. Most leaders stressed the need of involving them when decisions are made about their staff members professional development needs.

The data revealed that there is a need for a wider understanding of staff members' and leaders' professional development needs. This also could be seen in other themes presented in this chapter earlier, such as *Lack of staff members' and leaders' voices*, and *Irrelevant professional development programs*. Within these themes, the participants echoed the need to involve them in the decision-making process of their own professional development needs. In addition, data showed that

top management is concentrating on the organization's development needs rather than its staff's professional development needs. Among the major themes revealed through analysing the participants' responses was the need for *Expanding online professional development opportunities*, such as online conferences, courses and training programs (Table 5.13).

Table 5.13 Example responses for *Expanding online professional development opportunities*

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
Expanding online professional development opportunities	<p>Staff members</p> <p>To provide more opportunities for professional development, such as to expand more chances for online development like online conferences and courses. (Staff Member-5)</p> <p>I think professional development opportunities should be available throughout the year and not only in the summer. Provide opportunities for online conferences and the management pay for them. (Staff Member-10)</p> <p>Leaders</p> <p>I think the IPA must activate its social media accounts for discussions and not use them only to show what they have done and what training programs will be offered. (Leader-2)</p> <p>I think the IPA management should try to share with us online resources to help us develop professionally, or maybe pay for online courses that could help us to develop. For example, grant us access for online conferences. To support and encourage online training. (Leader-4)</p>	8

All participants were asked if they use the internet and social media for professional development. As presented earlier in this chapter, most participants indicated that they use the internet when they were asked about what they do to support their professional development. At the same time, the overall data revealed that most participants use social media for enjoyment and recreation. However, a significant number proposed the need to expand online professional development opportunities.

They believe that IPA management or IPA higher administration should make use of online sources, such as conferences and training programs to help support the professional development of IPA staff members and leaders.

Another theme revealed through analysing participant responses was *Supporting knowledge transfer*, which could be linked with two themes presented earlier in this chapter: (i) *Lack of collaboration*; and (ii) *Expanding online professional development opportunities*. Many participants suggested creating a platform to help the sharing and transferring of knowledge and experiences that could support the professional development of IPA staff members and leaders. Other participants, among those who had participated in annual summer training programs, suggested conducting meetings to facilitate *Supporting knowledge transfer* (Table 5.14).

Table 5.14 Example responses of *Supporting knowledge transfer*

Theme	Example responses	Number of similar responses
Supporting knowledge transfer	<p>Staff members</p> <p>I suggest for a platform for all staff members to share their experiences and knowledge. (Staff Member-1).</p> <p>I think we need a platform that is not centralized, and everyone get to see what everyone had said and recommended or suggested, such as making online group discussions that could be seen and accessed by everyone in the organization. It also give me the chance to observe other opinions regarding the ideas I present on the platform. (Staff Member-8)</p> <p>Leaders</p> <p>I think it might be a good idea to gather us together with other staff members after each summer training program and share with each other what we have learned from those programs. This way we support knowledge transfer among staff members. (Leader-4)</p> <p>Knowledge transfer from consultation and training agencies that the IPA host every year, they come and go every year and we do not get the opportunity to learn from them. We want to attend the yearly round table or at least broadcast it to watch it. (Leader-8)</p>	6

As identified in Table 5.14, some participants believed it was important for IPA management to place additional effort and thought into creating an online platform or discussion board that supports professional development among staff members and leaders. The proposed idea by some of the participants was to create an easily accessible platform where they could share experiences and knowledge that would support their professional growth and development. This is similar to the findings in the survey data where 99 participants thought that knowledge transfer is effective and useful, especially for newly hired staff members. Most believed that *Supporting knowledge transfer* helps to minimise mistakes and speeds up the process of learning and development.

Furthermore, two participants emphasised upon the role of job rotation as part of what IPA management should do to support staff members' and leaders' professional development. Staff Member-5 stated, "I think we need more job rotation to develop." In addition, Leader-3 stated:

I think we need more job or position rotation. I have been working for the same position for 10 years now. I think it is very important to change and experience working for different managements such as the Management of Consultation and Studies. This could be very beneficial for me as a leader and a staff member. I think positions rotation is very effective to develop IPA leaders.

This statement may explain the poor position rotation process at the IPA. Leader-3 stated that he has been working in the same position as a leader for 10 years. This point is further discussed in the next chapter.

Other participants had different views when asked about what IPA management should do to support the professional development of staff members

and leaders. For instance, Staff Member-2 stated that it is essential for IPA management to share new reports and legislation with staff members:

I think the first thing they should do is share with us new reports and legislations from the Ministry of Finance, General Authority of Zakat and Tax and General Auditing Bureau, such as the new VAT.

Another participant proposed involving permanent committees and allowing them to conduct meetings to discuss professional development needs of staff members:

I think they also should contact the sectors permanent committees and take their opinions for the staff members' professional development needs. Also the sectors permanent committees could make or should be allowed to make meetings to find out about their staff members professional development needs. (Staff Member-4)

At the IPA there are permanent committees for each department and major to discuss plans for development, improvement and change. Staff Member-4 indicated that another task for permanent committees should be added where they should discuss their staff members' professional development needs, this point could be linked to another theme presented earlier, *Lack of staff members' and leaders' voices*.

Another interesting point was presented by Staff Member-9 who perceived that the IPA management role is to determine what IPA staff members and leaders need to develop professionally, such as keeping up-to-date with global trends and changes. He perceived that the IPA management role is based on identifying the gaps and how to address them:

I think the IPA management should keep an eye on the new global trends and develop the staff members accordingly. The IPA management should evaluate the situation and locate or find the gap according to the global demands and how to meet them and develop the staff members based on

those bases and conditions or circumstances. I think that the main role of IPA management is to find the gap and fill this gap based on the global demands of our different professions or majors. (Staff Member-9)

From Staff Member-9's statement, he believes that IPA management should be aware of the professional development needs of different majors and fields. It means that there are different professional development needs of the diverse fields and majors at the IPA, as emphasised by Leader-2:

We need more training programs in TESOL and applied linguistics, second language acquisition, or language learning and teaching, but the IPA management seems to be less concerned with our professional development needs. I think the IPA management needs to pay more attention towards the professional development needs of ELC staff members. (Leader-2)

Based on the data, it seems that IPA management has not paid enough attention to the specific professional development needs of English language staff members. English language staff members and other majors, such as Computer Science, Accounting, Statistics, and Information Science expressed similar views; they proposed the need for IPA management to put extra effort in considering their professional development needs. This could be seen in three presented themes: (i) *Irrelevant professional development programs*; (ii) *Lack of staff members' and leaders' voices*; and (iii) *Importance of leaders' voices*. This point is further discussed in the next chapter.

Another point worth considering and presenting is how the role of management creates a positive environment in supporting the professional development of staff members; this could also be related to another theme that is presented earlier in the previous section, namely, *Creating a positive environment for professional development*, as explained by Leader-3:

I think it is very important to improve and enhance the work environment, because many staff members feel down because that there are few things that they do not like and do not feel comfortable with at their workplace. For example, justice in giving equal opportunities for all staff members to benefit from the different programs and it is based on financial issues and economical concerns. I think there should be an equal opportunity for all, especially in assigning tasks that could help to make more money, and this is a very crucial issue. Some staff members have never been given the chance to participate in consultation studies and others have had several opportunities and that made them gain more income compared to other colleagues who have never had the opportunity to participate in any activity or projects that would help them to benefit financially. Therefore, some staff members think that why would I develop myself and become a better staff member if I am not going to be involved in other future projects or studies from the IPA management. (Leader-3)

When Leader-3 was asked his viewpoint about what IPA management should do to support professional development, he stressed the importance of justice and to create a positive environment for all staff members so that they can develop professionally, as well as to give them the opportunity to participate in activities that would benefit them financially and professionally. Leader-3 further stressed that many staff members felt let down because of the injustice of not being given the equal opportunity to benefit financially. This point is further discussed in the next chapter.

Another interesting perspective was presented by Leader-4 when asked about his thoughts on what IPA management should do to support professional development:

I think that the management role is not merely based on applying legislations but rather helping staff members and leaders in an appropriate way to help them develop professionally. I think the IPA management should assign leaders who are good in their communication skills rather than choosing staff who have good knowledge. (Leader-4)

It can be seen that Leader-4 thinks that IPA management should assign leaders who are proficient in communicating so that they are able to influence their staff members in a positive way and to help them develop professionally.

Leader-4 further stated that general directors, branch managers and other IPA staff members in higher positions, who are responsible for making decisions of assigning new leaders and managers, should know their staff members well enough to assign them for their new leadership positions and tasks:

I think the general director needs to understand closely the personalities of his staff members to assign the right person for leading his department or sector. I think a good leader is the one who can influence others despite his knowledge and experience and support his staff members to achieve the organization goals. I think the leader's personality is important to impact his staff members and help them develop professionally.
(Leader-4)

Leader-4 stressed the importance of improving leaders' communication skills to enable the support of their staff members' professional development. He perceived that successful leaders are those who have good communication skills that can influence their staff members regardless of any underlying competency. This again highlights the importance of leadership roles in supporting the professional development of staff members, which also could be relevant to the *Importance of leaders' voices* theme, previously presented in this chapter.

5.2.4 Participant perceptions on least or most preferred models of professional development

The majority of participants reported that they often use and rely on the internet to support their professional growth and development; this matches was found in the survey data, which means that most participants identified the internet as the most effective tool to support their professional knowledge and skills. Notably, most

participants reported that they will use the internet when asked about how they support their professional growth and development. Participants were also asked if they use social media for professional development and how it was being used. The following are example extracts from their responses:

Example extracts from staff members' responses

Because I love reading, when I come across a new thing, I try to learn about it. That is why I use the internet and electronic books. I mainly rely on online sources. There are many websites that can help you in many ways. (Staff Member-1)

I use the internet a lot, and I consider it to be the first source for me. Even some of the books I have chosen to buy where from the internet. I searched online for new books to buy. For me, the internet is the main source to keep myself updated about new knowledge and skills in my field. (Staff Member-4)

Example extracts from leaders' responses

Yes, I use Linda.com, it is one of the sources and the mind tools application, it is a good application that could give you ideas about professional development management and strategic planning and projects management. (Leader-5)

Yes, of course. I think this is the first source for me. For using the internet, I use google scholar. In addition, I look for some websites that interests me. for example, in self-development, Nasser Alarfij website. (Leader-6)

Although using social media seemed to be the least preferred method or approach of supporting professional development, it is worth mentioning that some staff members used social media for professional development more than their leaders. However, most participants preferred to use Twitter, and some leaders preferred WhatsApp. This point is further discussed in the next chapter.

Some of the participants reported that they preferred to share ideas through the interaction of responsive social media, such as Twitter, Telegram and WhatsApp,

because of their easy access for new information and the ability to observe different and latest views; this matched the data found in the survey. Others reported that social media allows for easy sharing of links and videos. Most participants also highlighted that Twitter helps to gain new knowledge by following pioneer accounts in their fields. The following example extracts were received when participants were asked if they use social media for professional development:

Example extracts from staff members' responses

On social media, I follow people who are majoring in English such as on Twitter, and I see what they have to say about new trends in the field. (Staff Member-1)

Yes, I use Twitter; I think Twitter is a very rich source for finding new information. I follow people who share the same interests as me. I follow people who tweet about my major and my field of expertise. I follow individuals and cooperation accounts to support my professional development. (Staff Member-3)

For social media, I mostly use Twitter. I also use Telegram. I also subscribe to YouTube channels and this is what I use the most. However, Twitter is number one for me then YouTube and after that Telegram. (Staff Member-5).

Example extracts from leaders' responses

Yes, I use the internet. I am not very active on social media. Sometimes, I use Twitter and read about new trends and news. I do not like to use social media very much. (Leader-2)

For social media, I use only WhatsApp, because I have several groups with other colleagues where we share information about work. Me and my colleagues in the office management sector we have a group where we share new information about our major. (Leader-4)

According to findings from the survey and interviews, most preferred models or approaches of professional development are as follows:

1. Using the internet
2. Collaboration
3. Community of practice

Example extracts of participant responses

I think that collaboration among colleagues is the most effective model of professional development, it is like training without having to interrupting your daily work tasks and it is easily accessible and it could last for a very long time. (Staff Member-5)

I think learning and developing by practice is the best way to support my professional development. Also, collaboration with other colleagues. (Staff Member-11)

I think it is very important to work with more experienced staff members to help us develop professionally. I think it helps us to face the challenges in our everyday work activities. I think working with more experienced staff members give us the opportunities to learn quickly and easily to avoid their mistakes and gain knowledge and skills that are needed for our everyday training and work tasks. (Staff Member-12)

According to findings in the survey data and interviews, the least preferred models or approaches of professional development are as follows:

1. Using social media
2. Locally based and designed IPA training programs
3. Writing for academic journals

Some participants reported that they use social media for professional development and some other leaders preferred to use different applications and social media networks such as WhatsApp and YouTube. However, it seems that social media is gaining more interest as a number of participants are using it to develop their professional skills and knowledge, and to improve work practices. Some participants

expressed that using social media is like having fun while learning without the formality or any form of pressure. Following are example extracts of their responses:

Example extracts from staff members' responses

On social media, I follow some accounts on Twitter that provide me with new information and knowledge about my field. What I like about social media is the fact that I do not have any form of pressure to understand something it is the fact that I am enjoying learning away from formal settings. (Staff Member-2)

For social media, I use Twitter and Snapchat and follow some accounts who are interested in the same field. I also use YouTube to find out new training ideas. (Staff Member-6)

Example extracts from leaders' responses

Yes, I use YouTube. It is easy to find relevant videos to your professional development needs. I do not have to use any other social media. (Leader-5)

Yes, I have used social media, I use WhatsApp, I am a member of a group who discuss issues associated with public management and opportunities to pursue postgraduate degrees. (Leader-6)

It seems that Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp and Telegram are the most common social media networks for most of the participants. Using the internet and collaboration are the most preferred approaches and methods. Writing for academic journals and locally designed training programs appear to be least preferred approaches. However, almost all participants stressed upon the need of involving them to decide their professional development needs and to choose suitable programs for themselves regardless of currently offered professional development programs and opportunities.

5.3 Findings from the focus group interview

As presented in Chapter 4, the scope of the research questions needed different research methods to garner in-depth data. Each research tool has its advantages and disadvantages (refer to Sections 4.4 and 4.4.3 for further details). Focus group interviews allow participants to control the discussion, ask questions, and pose their opinions. My aim was to discover original ideas and explore innovative issues that may arise from the discussion.

Six faculty staff members volunteered to participate in the interview. They were given the following pseudonym names: Sultan, Hassan, Abdullah, Ali, Adel, and Hamed. Before commencing the interview, I reminded the participants about its purpose (refer to Section 4.4.3 for further details). Then I introduced the first topic to be discussed. Prior to moving onto the next topic, the participants were asked if they had anything to add (more details are provided below in this section).

The following sections are organised and divided based on the topics and questions discussed in the interview. All participants informed me that they took part in the survey, but none participated in the semi-structured interviews. My role as a moderator was limited to intervening with appropriate non-directive questions and suggestions. The following graph (Figure 5.8) summarises the main topics for discussion and their associated themes.



Figure 5.8 Discussed topics and identified themes

5.3.1 Professional development models and approaches

The discussion commenced with discussing the survey questions and asking the participants what they thought was important regarding the provision for professional development. The first point (*Observation*) was presented by Hamed who highlighted the importance of observing lectures or classes presented by experienced staff members, especially for those who did not have a chance to prepare prior to teaching their first classes, "It is very important, especially for English new staff members to be given the opportunity to observe classrooms presented by more experienced staff members." Most participants nodded their heads in agreeance.

Hamed further elaborated that there is a need to prepare English language staff members because they are the only faculty members who have to teach and present training programs before obtaining their master's degree and have the required experience:

English language staff members are asked to teach classes prior any preparation and before obtaining their MA degrees unlike other staff members who have to teach and train after they have obtained their MA degrees and have more experience.

Another point was presented by Abdullah who suggested using the first year of hiring new staff to support professional growth and development for a better preparation of work practices, particularly because it is already implemented by IPA management. That is, newly hired faculty members are required to work for different departments, sectors and centres based on management's and branch managers' decisions as a means to guiding them in their first year so that they experience different environments and situations, and to understand the IPA's culture of professionalism.

IPA staff members spend one year in working for different administrative departments before they leave to do their MA degrees, this could be used to develop and train them to be prepared before they come back from overseas.

However, it is important to reiterate that newly hired English language staff members do not get that opportunity because they start teaching from their first day on the job without any preparatory program.

Abdullah stressed upon Hamed's point of view about the importance and benefits of observing training sessions and classes presented by experienced staff members:

Some newly hired staff members are a bit hesitant at the beginning to conduct training programs, but by making them observe classes of more experienced staff members they decide sometimes from the first day to go ahead and teach or train.

Some participants replied, "Yes, this is true." Others nodded their heads in agreeance with this point. According to the participants' perceptions, it appeared that

'observation' could be a powerful tool for professional development, especially for newly hired staff members. According to Abdullah, "Observation of training programs helped them to break the wall of fear."

Next, the discussion drifted towards another relevant point, the *Train new trainers* program where all staff members must undertake this program before training government employees or teaching classes; it is expected to be conducted after the attainment of the master's degree or postgraduate. Some participants complained about having to wait long periods of time to receive this training, stating that they commenced training and presented classes well before undertaking the training program, which was believed to provide them a background about the approaches, techniques and skills of handling the classroom and training programs.

Furthermore, Adel elaborated that the content of these programs, in particular, the *Train new trainers* was very general in nature, because it did not cover specific majors and professional needs at the IPA, "The content is very general, they try to cover most IPA activities and we attend with other staff members in different fields and majors." This point highlights the findings from the semi-structured interviews regarding the need to implement different professional development programs that would meet the specific professional development needs of different majors, sectors, and departments at the IPA.

We need more specific training towards the different majors. For example, training programs for English Staff member and training programs for business majors and so on. (Adel)

Another participant suggested using online training to meet the various specific professional development needs of each department or major:

It is better to have training programs designed for each department. We could put them on online training that is suitable for their specific professional development needs. This approach could be very sustainable and more oriented towards the special training needs. (Ali)

In agreement with Ali, Sultan said, “Yes, I think it would be better to have online training programs that we could access easily.” This again matches the findings obtained from the semi-structured interviews where participants suggested the need to expand online professional development opportunities.

Furthermore, Ali reported:

We need to make new IPA staff members aware of the IPA professionalism culture and to teach them about how to teach training programs the IPA way and what kind of issues that they might face by using online training.

Most participants said, “Yes,” and nodded their heads in agreeance with this point, which is discussed in the next chapter.

Another comment came from Hassan who expressed that there are some preparation training programs that could be, and should be, presented to all majors, such as presentation skills. However, he still believes that there is a need to have different training programs that would meet the specific professional development needs of each department, sector and major:

There are some general programs that could be presented to all majors such as presentation skills. However, we need other preparation programs provided for the different majors.

Finally, Abdullah had the last comment:

We could choose one of the experienced staff members to share his experience in delivering training programs with newly hired staff members

or new MA graduates, for example to talk about issues in dealing with older trainees and other issues they may encounter in the classroom.

All other participants agreed and said, “This is useful”, “This is beneficial”, or nodded their heads in agreeance with the statement. This point signals the importance of *Sharing experiences* and reflects on the *Lack of collaboration* and *Knowledge transfer* themes presented earlier in this chapter.

After that, I asked all participants if they had anything to add about the survey questions, professional development models and approaches, and currently offered professional development programs by IPA management; they answered, “No.” As shown above, the major ideas presented and discussed by the participants were observation, sharing experiences and using the internet for professional development.

Before moving forward, it is important to mention that no one talked about or mentioned using social media for professional development, although most participants agreed on the usefulness and effectiveness of using the internet for professional development. Due to time constraints, the discussion was guided towards the next topic, *Leaders’ role in supporting professional development*.

5.3.2 *Leaders’ role in supporting professional development*

The discussion was initiated by asking participants about their thoughts on the role of leaders in supporting professional development among their staff members. First, Sultan stressed that the leader’s role is about encouraging and motivating staff members to develop professionally; this statement matched some of the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews regarding the role of leaders in ‘creating a positive environment for professional development’. It meant that the leader is

responsible for providing a healthy environment to support the professional development of his/her staff members.

Sultan further reported, "We need to give leaders more tools and authority to help develop their staff members." In response to Sultan's statement, Abdullah replied:

Leaders do not have the authority to specify their staff members professional development needs, and the human resource development management decide upon all the professional development opportunities provided for staff members and their leaders.

This matches the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews concerning the *Lack of staff members' and leaders voices*, where many participants reported that professional development at the IPA is a top-down process that does not allow their voices to be heard. This centralised approach of the current professional development system is negatively impacting professional development experiences of staff members and their leaders.

According to the participants, HRD management controls all decisions for staff members and leaders, managers and head departments concerning professional development. These decisions were previously the responsibility of the planning and development management. However, the current scenario is similar, although IPA management has recently established an HRD management. All participants agreed and confirmed that the same issues still exist regardless of the new managerial structure and changes. According to Abdullah, there is still a need and demand to consider and listen to leaders about their staff members' professional development needs. He reiterated, "I think we need to listen from head departments and leaders about their staff members professional development needs."

Abdullah further reported:

These days, most training programs choices are based on choosing the right place not choosing the right professional development program. We need more flexibility in choosing the right and most suitable professional development programs for our needs.

He means that staff members now choose from a limited list of professional development programs that are introduced every summer based on the convenience of time and location, but not based on actual professional development needs, because they are offered to meet organisational or IPA management needs rather than staff members' and leaders' professional development needs. This again matches the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews where most of the participants expressed that the currently offered professional development programs are 'irrelevant' to their actual professional development needs. Abdullah suggested that IPA management should communicate with leaders regarding their staff members' professional development needs:

I think the management of planning and development should contact managers and head departments and sectors to decide upon their staff members' professional development needs.

Sultan followed with his statement after changing his mind:

Personally, I do not like the idea of leaders or head departments to choose for us. I think it is about staff members themselves. Make them choose their own professional development programs that meet their own personal needs within a framework or a set of criteria.

It is important to mention that Sultan opened up the discussion in this section by emphasising on the role of leaders in supporting professional development among their staff members, based on encouraging and motivating them towards professional

self-development. He also suggested giving leaders a more active role in the decision-making process concerning their staff members' professional development needs.

Next, Ali interrupted the discussion by expressing his opinion that professional development programs should be offered throughout the year, that is, not only during the summer months. He also suggested allocating a yearly professional development budget for each employee or staff member; they could choose whatever they deemed suitable for their professional development needs.

It should also be open throughout the year, not only in the summer. For example, the management could put a specific budget for professional development, and we choose the programs. (Ali)

Ali further reported on another idea that was repeatedly mentioned in the semi-structured interviews by most participants, which was presented under the theme of 'irrelevant' professional development programs:

I think there is also another problem, the IPA management want to focus on research and consultation skills training. We need training in our majors and fields. For those who want training in research and consultation skills they might find it useful, but for those who want professional development programs in their majors or fields the choices are absent or very limited.

Indeed, many participants in the semi-structured interviews reported that the current professional development opportunities and programs are designed to meet organisational objectives or IPA management needs, as opposed to meeting the needs of staff members and leaders for their professional development needs.

In agreement with Ali's statement, Adel stated, "I think the current professional development programs meet the organization needs more than our individual or different department needs." This again matches the findings from the semi-

structured interviews where most of the participants reported that current professional development opportunities do not meet and satisfy their needs. Also, most of the participants in the focus group agreed with this statement by nodding their heads or saying, “Yes, this is true” and “Yeah! Yeah!”

Finally, due to time constraints with only one hour left, the discussion was guided towards the role of management in supporting professional development among staff members. However, it was important to cover the main aims of this thesis, which mainly concentrated on, and related to, the participants’ professional development experiences and needs. Prior to moving on to the next section, the participants were asked if they had any comments to add regarding their leaders’ roles in supporting their professional development, or their professional development experiences and needs; they replied, “No.”

In summary to this section, there was a consensus among the participants about the importance of leaders’ voices in determining staff members’ professional development needs. It concerns enabling and empowering leaders to play a more active role after given the authority to decide their staff members professional development needs and plans, or at least to communicate with them before any decisions are made or any professional development plans are implemented. This point is further discussed in the next chapter.

5.3.3 Management role in supporting professional development

Prior to pushing the discussion further, the participants were asked if they had anything to add regarding the provision for professional development, or any previously discussed ideas, statements and questions. After all participants replied

'No', a new discussion opened by asking them about their viewpoints on the role of IPA management in supporting and improving professional development.

The first response came from Abdullah who stressed that professional development training should be compulsory and linked to their yearly performance evaluation. Abdullah also stated that he had not enrolled in any professional development programs over the last five years because they were optional, and they were not going to change anything. He suggested that training should be associated with other privileges to be successful, "To force people to attend training programs and link it to their performance evaluation. Me myself I did not go for any summer training programs for five years." Abdullah also added that IPA management are not aware of staff members' performance and professional development needs; this response matches others received from the semi-structured interviews. The other participants also nodded their heads in agreeance with this point.

Then, Hassan stressed the need for listening to staff members regarding their professional development needs, "It is very important to listen to IPA staff members and ask them about their professional development needs." Most of the participants also nodded their heads in agreeance, some replied, "Yeah", "Yes", and "This is true." Hassan's statement is similar to other responses and comments presented in the semi-structured interviews findings under the theme of *Lack of staff members' and leaders' voices*. Like many other participants in this thesis, Hassan suggested using a questionnaire or survey to gather information about staff members' professional development needs.

Hassan added, "I think the IPA management is responsible for locating our weaknesses and to look for what staff members need to develop precisely." This idea

matches many responses obtained from the semi-structured interviews under the theme, *Identifying weakness and professional development needs*. Some participants in the focus group interview nodded their head in agreeance with this statement as well. Also in agreement with Hassan, Ali expressed that this point is one of the biggest challenges for IPA management because they believe they are leaders in the field of professional development in the country, but in reality, they are lacking in identifying their staff members' weaknesses and professional development needs:

The IPA still think they are leading the field of professional development, but in reality, the IPA is losing its place and other organizations started to take place and advancing very well. (Ali)

Abdullah interrupted and stressed that IPA management should plan ahead for staff members' professional development; he proposed using their ideas for development:

I think the IPA management should think about what is coming ahead, and use staff members' ideas to prepare for what is coming ahead and how everything is changing very quickly.

This point is further discussed in the next chapter. Abdullah also suggested training staff members on using new technology before they arrive for work. He also stressed on the importance of the experienced staff member's voice:

I think they need to pay attention towards opinions coming from experienced staff members and ask them about what they need to prepare for future challenges and changes.

Most of the participants nodded their heads in agreeance with this statement. Then Sultan reiterated an idea that he had mentioned in the focus group discussion (Section 5.3.3):

I think the IPA management role should be based on setting a framework, to put a strategic plan, and supervising the execution of programs only.

Leave the professional development needs for the different management leaders and head departments.

Sultan previously stressed that the provision of professional development is about staff members making their own decisions about their professional development needs within a framework or a set criteria placed by IPA management. Sultan further stated that IPA management should not interfere in decision-making about staff members' professional development because the management is not familiar with what is happening and the kind of problems being encountered in staff members' and leaders' daily work:

Think of every single department as a kitchen. There are some problems no one knows about and face except for those who work in the same kitchen. Therefore, the higher management interference in these problems might cause other issues because they do not know what is happening under.

Sultan's point was similar to several responses in the semi-structured interviews under the theme, *Lack of staff members' and leaders' voices*. Most of the participants in the focus group agreed with Sultan.

Next, Hamed proposed that IPA management should ask staff members to provide "feedback about the training programs offered to them after they come back from the summer training programs". In reply to Hamed's proposal, Adel suggested that staff members should be instructed to draft a report after they return from their summer training to verify the program's effectiveness and usefulness, "I think they should ask staff members to write a report about the training they have recently received to make sure those programs are effective." In agreement with Adel, Abdullah added, "I think they should make a presentation and share it with other staff

members in their departments.” All these ideas match others presented earlier in this chapter under the *Knowledge transfer* theme and *Lack of collaboration* theme.

The discussion took a new turn when Abdullah talked about issues related to the yearly overseas training programs. He stressed that IPA management needs to apply ‘strict standards’ against international training institutions or agencies, and expend extra effort into locating better training companies or institutions with an acceptable reputation:

I think some overseas training agencies are not very serious and strict about their training, and they allow some trainees to skip the first day or two and sometimes they give the trainees their training certificates before the end of the program.

This point is worth further analysis, as discussed in the next chapter. However, in reply to Abdullah’s statement, Ali stated:

In my last training program, the trainer told us that tomorrow will be the last day of training, but the next day he told us that he has received an email from the management of planning and development asking to test us on the last day of training and we had to stay to the last day of training.

From this narrative, Ali’s reply to Abdullah expressed that IPA management could introduce themselves to training agencies or institutions to ensure “everything is done in the right way”. From this suggestion, a closer look is needed to investigate and study the process of choosing suitable training institutions to meet the demands and needs of staff members and IPA management.

Following on, after a decision was made to end the discussion due to time constraints, the participants were asked if they had further statements or if they would like to comment on any of the ideas presented by the participants, to which they replied, “No.” They were thanked for participating in the discussion, asked if they

wanted to comment further on any of their views and ideas. Again, they said, “No,” at which time the recording was stopped.

To sum up, most of the participants agreed on the importance of staff members’ voices to be heard to allow for decisions made concerning their professional development needs. The data revealed that the role of staff members in the provision of professional development is significant. In addition, most participants believed that IPA management should play a more active role in identifying weaknesses and professional development needs of their staff members. Simultaneously, the data obtained from both types of interviews showed that the centralised top-down approach of the professional development system is having a negative impact on professional development experiences for staff members and leaders.

Finally, a consensus on compulsory professional development programs was noted throughout the focus group interview, which could possibly result in IPA management paying more attention on its staff members’ and leaders’ professional development needs that will help them to progress and create new learning strategies.

5.4 Summary

This chapter presents in detail the reported findings from three datasets that draw upon the links between the themes and highlight the most important findings and ideas. One predominant view was the lack of relevance of the currently offered professional development opportunities, which is considered in the discussion chapter, along with other ideas.

The data revealed that the centralised ‘top-down’ approach of the current professional development system is negatively impacting the professional development experiences of faculty members and leaders. Many participants reported that they want to be involved in the decision-making process regarding their professional development needs. Staff members and leaders have stressed upon the importance of their voices to be heard to pave the way for successful professional development programs. Most participants reported that they only want the opportunity to communicate with IPA management or those in charge of making decisions concerning professional development needs. All these ideas are considered in the discussion chapter.

The negative impact on professional development caused by a heavy workload is another key theme that is associated with other themes such as *Lack of Collaboration* and *Absence of Leaders’ Roles*. Some participants reported that due to the heavy workload, they are too busy to collaborate or share their experiences. Other participants linked the absence of their leaders’ roles with being too busy supervising several departments and sectors. This point is discussed in Chapter 6.

The need for guidance and support from leaders and management is a significant topic linked and associated with several key themes presented in this chapter, namely, *The importance of leaders’ voices*, *Creating a positive environment*, *Identifying weakness and professional development needs*, *Supporting knowledge transfer* and *Sharing experiences*. All these themes and ideas presented above are considered further in the discussion chapter.

CHAPTER 6 – DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS

As explained in Chapter 1, the main reason for embarking on this thesis is my sense of failure as a leader in recognising and supporting professional development needs of my staff. Based on my own experience as a staff member and leader, I do not recall if IPA management and I discussed my professional development needs and concerns, whether formally or informally. Therefore, the research was mainly undertaken to explore and understand IPA faculty staff members' experiences of professional development.

To gain a better understanding of participants' professional development experiences, the key aim of this thesis was to explore their perceptions as to the least effective or most effective models of professional development. Additionally, in order to draw a wider picture, another aim was to explore leaders' perceptions of their roles in supporting professional development among their staff members. To sum up, all the main aims of the study are reflected on the research questions listed in Chapter 1.

6.1 Introduction

One of the main objectives of this chapter is to provide an understanding of the themes identified in the findings to reflect on professional development experiences and needs within the context of this research. First, the main findings are highlighted; they explain how the themes are situated within the previously published body of literature on professional development, followed by an attempt to explain how the findings helped in addressing the research questions.

Concurrently, I presented the contributions of the findings of this thesis to the body of knowledge in understanding professional development models and approaches, the role of leaders, and management in supporting professional development; and how to improve and possibly enhance the provision of professional development at the local level. Table 6.1 is a reminder of the key themes identified from the analysis of the findings that informs the discussion.

Table 6.1 Key themes of the study

Professional development experiences and needs	Leaders' roles in supporting professional development	Top management role in supporting professional development	Least/most effective (preferred) models of professional development
Lack of relevance Lack of voice Workload impact Lack of collaboration Absence of practical training Preparing new leaders	Absence of leaders' roles Identifying weakness and needs Importance of leaders' voices Lack of communication with leaders Creating a positive environment	Professional development needs analysis Expanding online professional development opportunities Supporting knowledge transfer Compulsory professional development programs Importance of staff members' voice Need for management guidance and support Importance of experienced staff members' voice	Most effective: Using the internet Collaboration. Community of practice. Knowledge transfer. Observation. Least effective: Using social media. Locally based and designed programs. Writing for academic journal

6.2 Understanding professional development experiences and needs

Both groups of participants (staff members and leaders) expressed similar thoughts and concerns regarding the provision of professional development, professional development experiences, and professional development needs, except that some

leaders stressed the need to prepare new leaders, managers and departments heads for their new role prior to embarking on their tasks.

Based on my own experience, I was nominated to be the manager of the English Language Centre one week prior to embarking on my new mission. I was not prepared to lead or manage my colleagues. In fact, I was not trained to do so, and I was not informed about my new job description or obligations. Sometimes I had to ask the previous manager and other managers about what to do on some occasions and cases. I was not given any form of preparation for my new position. As explained in Section 5.2.1, this was also reflected in most of the leaders' thoughts and concerns in this study.

At the IPA, new leaders/managers are nominated for their new position without being informed; it occurs solely based on the decision made by the director general and branch managers/directors. Newly nominated leaders are not given any time to prepare or to be trained for their new positions. Almost all department and sector staff and centre managers/leaders are selected based on their personal traits and whether general directors like them or not, or whether they think they might be useful and helpful to achieving their goals and plans. As presented in Chapter 2 on the managerial structure of the IPA, the senior headquarter director general (His Excellency) is nominated based on a decision made by the Council of Ministers, which is led by the King. The headquarter director general has full authority to decide and nominate new branch managers and directors who in turn will inform him about who is to be nominated for leadership as a manager, director, leader or department head in their local branch.

Many leaders reported that it was crucial to be granted time to prepare for their new tasks, and to be trained before starting their new mission. This was one of the insights of my study; it is extremely important to highlight the procedure for selecting new leaders or managers, which seems to be a common approach in other local contexts in Saudi Arabia, such as members of Council of Ministers, Shura Council, ministries, universities and other higher education institutions in the country.

Throughout the three datasets, the participants clearly reported that the current professional development opportunities offered to them did not meet their needs. In the survey, however, it was clear that 65.9% of the respondents seemed to be satisfied with the professional development opportunities offered to them by the IPA (refer to Section 5.1 for further details). Nevertheless, the qualitative responses under the same question matched the data I obtained from the semi-structured interviews which reflected the dissatisfaction with the offered professional development training programs and opportunities. It seems therefore that it is crucial to utilise different data collection tools to explore beyond the numerical data of questionnaires and surveys.

Participants who were willing to take part in the face-to-face interviews were more explicit about their professional development experiences and needs. As presented in Chapter 5, most participants expressed the training programs and professional development opportunities being offered were irrelevant. The majority of the participants demonstrated that they needed professional development programs directed toward their majors and specific needs.

The lack of voice for staff members and leaders was a recurring theme across all three datasets. Most of the participants reported that they only want to be listened

to in terms of determining their professional development needs. The data has revealed that the centralised and top-down approach of the current professional development system has a negative impact on their professional development experiences. This is observed in Section 5.2.1 where many participants complained about not being listened to in terms of determining their professional development needs, with some suggesting that they should at least be surveyed about their professional development needs. It was evident that both groups of participants expressed similar thoughts and concerns. Staff members and leaders wanted to be listened to, or to have any form of contact prior to making decisions regarding their professional development.

This resonates with the literature review study of teacher professional development by Svendsen (2020) who noted that the most professional development initiatives are based on what we can do for teachers in a top-down approach, which is exactly taking place in the context of this study. She stated that successful professional development initiatives are supposed to be designed with the inclusion of the recipients. This matches what the participants requested, that is, to be given the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process regarding their professional development needs.

As explained in Sections 5.2.2 and 5.2.3, staff members and leaders expressed the importance of determining their professional development needs. The situation as it stands today is that IPA top management drafts the key guidelines and professional development objectives for HRD management on the overall institution professional development needs without paying attention to any of the sectors, departments, individual staff members, leaders or other employees. This has led to many issues that have created a negative impact on the current professional

development system on staff members' and leaders' professional development experiences (presented in Chapter 5).

This also resonates with studies undertaken by Svendsen (2020), Alhabahba and Mahfoodh (2016) and Dall'Alba and Sandberg (2006) who report that it is necessary to involve the recipients in the decision-making and planning processes regarding their professional development to help reform, improve and implement new changes (Butler, 1992). Additionally, as indicated by Pricope (2018), professional development should pave the way for teachers to choose the learning programs that would help them become more professional in their field of work. Professional development should be perceived as a 'personal choice' to satisfy individual professional needs. I believe that this is also necessary for IPA staff members and leaders, and it is what I observed from many participants during the semi-structured interviews.

As presented in Chapter 3, professional development can consist of planned and intentional personal or institutional efforts through a formal system that supports professional knowledge and skills, such as attending conferences, undertaking training programs or engaging in a community of practice, to name a few activities. As mentioned in Chapter 3, Section 3.3, the concentration is on such planned, formal and intentional institutional efforts to promote professional development and to create professional development opportunities. Participants were given a platform to express their opinions and thoughts regarding the provision of programs for professional development.

On the other hand, professional development can be an informal and sometimes unintentional process that could result from interactions with the

professional context and other colleagues at work (Kelchtermans, 2004). Additionally, Chapter 5 explains how some participants used the internet and social media as a way to support their professional knowledge and skills informally, and this could be described as informal and intentional professional development.

In addition, my findings have helped in contributing to the body of knowledge in providing empirical data on the importance of activating the roles of leaders and different sectors permanent committees in supporting professional development and identifying their staff members' professional development needs. Leaders form a strong close relationship with their staff members, therefore, they understand the different demands of staff members. This also addresses the first and third research questions where it seems that both groups of participants (staff members and leaders) are not satisfied with the current professional development opportunities available to them. Both groups reflected similar thoughts and concerns regarding the provision of programs for professional development.

Throughout the findings from the three datasets, 'Collaboration' stood out as a crucial approach for supporting professional development among staff members and leaders. The findings suggest that it is highly beneficial to engage staff members and new leaders in meeting with their experienced counterparts, which encourages collaboration among peers (Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2006). However, one key finding of this thesis is the proposal to create an online platform to share ideas and professional development opportunities and experiences to support collaboration. In today's environment with the COVID-19 pandemic looming and overseas training almost at a halt, collaboration is more important than ever because teamwork is easily achieved due to it being cost-effective, supportive and enables each member to address local contextual needs and issues.

Another interesting finding of this research is the fact that collaboration among staff members is more active in departments and sectors where there are few practical training programs and professional development opportunities that address different professional development needs. This may also explain why 'Collaboration' was the second highest rated item in the survey as an effective model or approach for supporting professional knowledge and skills development. It appeared that staff members in these departments and sectors began to look for different channels and other ways to support their professional development due to the lack of support from IPA top management and HRD management (refer to Section 5.2.1 for further details).

The negative impact of a participant's heavy workload placed on his/her professional development was another major issue that not only influenced the professional development experiences of staff members and leaders, but also one of the main reasons for a lack of collaboration. Many participants in this research complained about the heavy workload; some suggested reducing the workload to allow extra time for collaboration and more occasions to support their own professional development (refer to Section 5.2.1 for further details). This was also reflected in Bubby and Earley's (2009) study, as well as Svendsen's (2020) review study on the literature of teacher professional development where she suggested for researchers in the field of teacher professional development to focus on the need of allocating more time for teachers to support their own professional development.

This appears to be a common global issue experienced by many countries in different contexts where budget is a major reason for drawbacks and limited support for professional development. In this study, the heavy workload was found to be one of the major reasons for the inadequate support of professional development

experienced by staff members and leaders. Staff members are too busy with their heavy workload to even consider attending professional development programs, and leaders are also too busy to think about their staff members' professional development demands, let alone their own professional development needs. Leaders barely have sufficient time to focus on their administrative duties, attend meetings and complete paperwork, while ensuring that deadlines are being met, problems or issues are resolved and the work environment is running smoothly. Therefore, it is essential to allocate extra time and to provide more opportunities for staff members and leaders to think about their professional development needs. Based on my experience as a former leader at the IPA, it is important to directly instruct staff to do so.

Overall, findings from this research revealed that participants are not contented with their professional development experiences and the opportunities offered to them by HRD management or top management. The findings suggest that participants preferred overseas training programs over the locally designed training programs currently being offered. Additionally, most participants view using the internet and collaboration as central to their personal professional growth, learning and development. At the same time, it is important to highlight that the findings revealed a disbelief and low trust in social media as a tool that could be utilised to support professional development. All these points are discussed in detail in the following sections.

6.3 Understanding the leader's roles in supporting professional development

As explained in Section 5.2.2, most staff members reported that their leaders did nothing to support their professional development. The data revealed that the leader's role is passive. As stated by most participants, the leader's role is only based on watching staff members arriving and leaving on time, and attending to their lectures and training sessions. Leaders are extremely busy managing their daily work obligations and administrative responsibilities, therefore, there is no time to think about their staff members' professional development needs. This resonates with findings of a study undertaken by Sywelem and Witte (2013) where they found that many school leaders in Saudi Arabia are too busy handling daily management responsibilities.

Most leaders do not consider their staff members' professional development needs; they only think about completing their daily tasks and obligations without an issue. Based on my experience, the leader's main focus is to ensure that top management and general directors are satisfied with the result in terms of meeting deadlines and the overall objectives and goals imposed upon them are being met. There is no attention given to encouraging leaders to improving work practices and supporting their staff members' autonomy and professional development.

In my previous positions as the manager of the English Language Centre and the manager of financial and administration affairs management, I do not recall any emphasis, encouragement or guidance from my superiors, the director general, top management or HRD management to pay attention or take care of my staff members' professional development, directly or indirectly. I never thought to support my staff members' professional development. Like most other leaders, my only concern was

to complete the job on time and to meet the general director's demands. For me, it was important that I maintained an excellent reputation of my management and department, and how my superiors viewed me as a leader. This probably suggests the need to reconsider the leader's role at the IPA and prepare them not to be processors of daily work and enforcers of rules and regulations, but rather become a source of inspiration, support and encouragement for development and reform.

My leadership skills were evaluated based on my ability to control my staff and getting things done without any issue; it was important to be perceived as a good manager. It was not about being creative, or supportive to my staff to become better employees; it was rather about how tough I am in terms of applying the rules and impressing on top management's vision. It was also about how dedicated I was in mentoring and making sure everyone completed their daily tasks and obligations on time, as well as assessing my ability to control my staff members rather than allowing them the opportunity to create, develop or improve.

In addition, it is very important to mention that the job descriptions of all IPA managers, leaders, departments heads or sectors do not state that they are required or encouraged to support their staff members' professional development, whether directly or indirectly. After reviewing most jobs descriptions for leaders and managers, I noticed that they were general in nature and they focussed more on the overall organisational objectives and aims. Therefore, I believe that leaders should be directly encouraged and instructed to be responsible for their staff members' professional development needs, because supportive leaders play a crucial role in supporting their staff members' professional knowledge and skills development (Dall'Alba & Sandberg, 2006).

As clarified in Section 5.2.2, one of the key findings was that several participants suggested appointing staff members who would be given additional time to look after issues and concerns related to professional development. This means assigning staff members in the same department or management to take care of their colleagues' professional development needs and to attend to their demands; this new assignment would help reduce the pressure on leaders who are constantly busy with administrative duties and responsibilities. This concept proved to be a successful strategy in Bubby and Earley's (2009) study where they found that assigning experienced staff members was not only useful and helpful for newly hired staff, but also for leaders. It also allowed more space and time for leaders to monitor their staff's development and to handle other issues.

This is also observed in Section 5.3.3 where the participants suggested that experienced staff members could play an effective role in supporting their professional development. It could be said that it might be helpful and useful to assign experienced staff members to be responsible for helping their colleagues to learn and develop, and possibly save them time to think about the issues they want to encounter, and possibly sharing with them useful and helpful professional development resources.

Other participants thought of their leaders' roles as mentors and guides who are expected to identify their weakness and address their professional development needs. As mentioned in Section 5.2.2, many of the participants reported that managers and leaders should be responsible for enlightening their staff members about their weaknesses and to help them identify their professional development needs. This possibly means that leaders should be allowed and encouraged to play

an active role in supporting and identifying their staff members' professional development needs.

At the same time, it was clear to note that leaders also had similar thoughts, with most of them believing that they were expected to take part in determining their staff members professional development needs. This addresses the fourth question, which is the second sub-question of this thesis. It is worth saying that top IPA management should allow leaders extra time, authority and tools to help them support and determine their staff members' professional development needs.

Furthermore, as expressed in Section 5.2.2, a considerable number of participants stressed upon the importance of the leader's voice in terms of communicating their professional development needs to top management. Both groups of participants (staff members and leaders) believed that the leader's voice is crucial in terms of determining professional development needs. Again, this shows that the findings of this study revealed a match between the perceptions of staff members and those of leaders regarding the provision for professional development, which answered the third question (first sub-question).

Some leaders reported that their roles are limited; they are inhibited by top management instructions and guidelines. One important finding of this thesis was that some leaders thought that their roles should include encouraging staff members to develop work practices and making them feel that their opinions are valuable and appreciated for improvement. This again answers the fourth research question (second sub-question) and shows how some leaders perceived their roles in supporting their staff members' professional development needs.

Similarly, other leaders thought that it was important to listen to staff members about their professional development needs and concerns because it makes it easier to develop practice and to solve problems. This contradicts the findings in Section 5.2.2 where many staff members reported that their voices are not being heard by their leaders, and the lack of communication with them negatively impacts their professional development experiences.

Moreover, one of the insights of this study is that many leaders reported that they never considered sharing new knowledge or trends in their field of employment with their staff members, formally or informally. The findings of this thesis suggest that leaders should be allowed to play a more active role in supporting their staff members by sharing new knowledge with them and discussing possible improvements and enhancements of work and professional development practices. In my opinion, top management should allow leaders to play a more active role in deciding their staff members' professional development needs, and to encourage them to share professional development opportunities, experiences and new knowledge with their staff members.

One of the key findings of this thesis is that leaders should be encouraged to make sure that their staff members are comfortable about sharing their thoughts, concerns and professional development needs by creating a positive work environment that promotes transparency and sharing ideas. Some participants echoed that leaders could motivate their staff members and encourage them to play a more active role in improving practices and creating a positive environment that helps to address their professional development needs. Therefore, it is undeniable that leaders could play a very important role in creating a comfortable and positive environment for staff members to encourage and support professional development.

This possibly means that it is crucial to create a supportive atmosphere and to allocate extra time and space for staff members to share and reflect on their experiences and practices that will support their own professional development.

Other staff member participants stressed that their voices are not being heard by their leaders. As described in Section 5.2.2, they proposed that leaders should open up different channels of communications so that discussions on work practices and professional development needs are encouraged. Several staff members indicated that leaders could respond to their staff, perhaps by email, to ask them about any concerns they may have, or about proposals to improve work practices and the environment. Across all three datasets, almost all participants asked for greater involvement in the decision-making process regarding determining their professional development needs. This resonates with findings of studies undertaken by Alshehry (2018), Mansour et al. (2014), and Sywalem and Wittee (2013) who reported that teachers' voices are essential in determining their professional development needs.

Throughout the findings from the three datasets, many participants reported that leaders should create a healthy and positive environment to support their staff members' professional development. As reported by Rhodes and Beneicke (2003) and Boreham (2004), teachers' performance is significantly influenced by their leaders and management practices. Regardless of top management practices and policies, it is apparent that leaders could play an important role in creating a comfortable work environment where collaboration is encouraged, and professional development is supported in various ways.

Based on the findings of this study, leaders' roles are concerned with involving their staff members and allowing them to play an active role in improving work practices and determining their own professional development needs. This was also highlighted by the United Nations Career website where it is stated that leaders are guides for staff members; leaders are responsible for providing a supportive work environment to support the career development of their staff. At the context of this research, top management is possibly unintentionally hindering leaders from supporting their staff members' professional development, despite the possibility that leaders could pave the way for their staff members by sharing ideas, collaborating and encouraging them to consider the importance of professional development.

Based on my own experience, there has been no evidence that top management or HRD management, and previously, the management of planning and development, have ever encouraged leaders to support, or at least consider, their staff members' professional development needs. Leaders have never been consulted or contacted about their professional development or their staff members' professional development needs. This reflects a traditional approach of professional development which requires leaders and their staff members to attend training programs selected by HRD management and top management, without regard to the importance of their voices being heard in determining their professional development needs. This resonates with study findings of Sabah, et al. (2014) where they reported that the most popular model of professional development in Saudi Arabia is the training model because it was chosen to meet the plans, demands and priorities of the higher authority.

All decisions regarding staff members' and leaders' professional development are imposed by senior management without consulting them about their needs or

concerns. As echoed by many participants in this thesis, I believe that all recipients of professional development programs and initiatives should be contacted or at least surveyed about their professional development needs and priorities prior to making any final decisions. This means that top management and decision-makers in the context of this thesis should incorporate a participatory system of professional development that involves all leaders and their staff members in the decision-making process regarding their professional development needs.

6.4 Top management's role in supporting professional development

Both groups of participants (staff members and leaders) gave the impression that they were aware of IPA top management's control and impact on their experiences of professional development. The participants demanded more support from top management, and most staff members seemed to know that their leaders were restricted by top management policies, desires and objectives. This matched the findings of the study undertaken by Alharbi (2011) who reported that teachers' professional development programs in Saudi Arabia are tailored based on the desires and objectives of the Ministry of Education.

As explained in Section 5.2.3, one of the key findings of this research was that some participants proposed that top management should conduct a professional development needs analysis to form the cornerstone of the professional development system. In fact, it is necessary to involve all leaders and their staff members in the decision-making process regarding their professional development and practice to help reform the system or implement new changes that allow them to conduct research studies to achieve the desired institutional objectives (Svendsen, 2020).

Other participants suggested conducting regular meetings and surveying them to address their professional development needs and concerns. This is also observed in Section 5.2.1 where many participants reported that they only want to be listened to if it affected their professional development needs. This resonates with findings of the studies undertaken by Mansour, et al. (2014), Sywalem and Witte (2013), Alshehry (2018) and Sabah et al. (2014) who echoed that teachers' voices are essential in determining their professional development needs.

The data presented in Sections 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3 show that almost every participant expressed their frustration at having no voice in determining their professional development needs. This addressed the third research question (first sub-question) which indicated that both groups of participants (staff members and leaders) shared the same perceptions and presented similar thoughts and concerns regarding the provision for professional development. This means that top management should give autonomy to leaders and their staff members to decide their own professional development needs and to involve them in the decision-making process.

Therefore, I would expect that a successful professional development system and its provision should be based on a participatory 'bottom-up' model or approach that supports collaboration, participation and collegial work (Mann, 2005). As echoed by Hargreaves (2003), professional development programs should be designed based on the needs of the recipients and their local context, rather than a 'one-size fit all' system. It could be said that it is about building a system of professional development based on feedback given by those who receive it, that is, to involve the recipients in making key decisions and choices regarding their professional development.

One interesting findings reported by some participants was that they wanted top management to expand on, and provide further online professional development opportunities. As mentioned in Section 5.2.3, some participants thought that online professional development programs would be more convenient to meet their busy schedules and would allow them to choose their preferred training programs. Others believed that online professional development programs could be used to allow leaders and their staff members more autonomy and freedom in choosing their preferred programs. They considered that online programs would help them to meet their busy timetables, that is, they would not disturb their daily work routines and obligations.

Now more than ever, online resources are essential to the work environment. After experiencing the past year with the COVID-19 pandemic, it is now crucial to invest in digital infrastructure and online professional development programs from online training to online conferences and workshops. Online resources could be cost effective in supporting professional development. In fact, there is a need for guided support from policymakers to top management and leaders to encourage their employees to use the internet for improving their professional skills and knowledge, and for helping them meet their individual needs (Alhabahba & Mahfoodh, 2016).

It is not expected for online resources to completely replace traditional forms of professional development. However, online professional development programs could be utilised to support other models or approaches of professional development. As identified in Section 5.1, face to face training was preferred by most participants in this thesis, which resonates with the findings of studies undertaken by Pricope (2018), and Alhabahba and Mahfoodh (2016) who found that their participants

preferred face to face interaction and reported that there is a need to implement other traditional forms of professional development.

One of the insights emerging from this thesis was that many participants proposed creating an easily accessible platform for sharing experiences and supporting knowledge transfer, as explained in Section 5.2.3. For instance, it could be useful to ask experienced staff or those who ventured overseas for professional development training to share their experiences and inform on what they learned from those opportunities. This is described in Section 5.1 where many participants reported that knowledge transfer is effective and useful, especially for newly hired staff.

Many participants also believed that 'supporting knowledge transfer' helps to minimise mistakes and to speed up the process of learning and development. This could be reflected on the 'cascade model' of professional development presented by Kennedy (2005, 2014) who highlighted that this model could be useful in situations where budgets are limited. This model could be used to allow experienced staff members to teach their less experienced counterparts about how to avoid making the same mistakes and how to support their professional learning and development. In the context of this thesis, the budget is becoming a major concern with the government's new strategic framework, *Saudi 2030 Vision* (<https://vision2030.gov.sa/en>). Therefore, the 'cascade model' of professional development could become an effective solution for maintaining a continuous and sustainable professional development system.

The data presented in Section 5.2.3 show that some participants complained about the position rotation process. Top management always claims that it has the

most successful position rotation standards in the country, but I found that some leaders in this research had been employed in the same position for 10 years. Other leaders must wait a number of years before the nomination period of four years is reached, after which time it will be renewed, as explained in Chapter 2. A new rotation is expected to take place after four years, but this does not happen. Therefore, a resultant negative work environment and a general sense of injustice and inequality among staff members are created. It is my belief that an effective position rotation process would help in creating a work environment that encourages staff members to become better employees, one that pushes them towards caring for their own professional development.

One of the insights in this thesis is that top management should act as a guide towards global trends and changes so that employees can identify relevant resources to support their professional development. The data presented in Sections 5.2.3 and 5.3 show that the top management role should be about locating the gaps and to help leaders and their staff members to address them. These gaps could be restraining the IPA from progressing further and achieving the desired reforms and goals. Top management could overcome these gaps and weaknesses by guiding and empowering staff members to be responsible for their own professional development, however, they need to be given additional time and space to maintain awareness of what is occurring around the world in their fields and majors, as well as to teach and guide them towards how to become more effective and better employees.

One interesting finding of this thesis is that top management is not giving enough attention to the specific professional development needs of English, Computer Science, Accounting, Statistics, and Information Science staff members.

As explained in Sections 5.1 and 5.2.3, many participants complained about less attention given to their professional development needs. Also, the data presented in Section 5.2.1 show that many participants expressed their frustration about the lack of relevance of the offered training programs and professional development opportunities. The IPA mainly relies on majors, such as public administration, business administration, office management and organizational behaviour; the remaining majors and sectors are considered to be supportive majors. I believe that this is one of the reasons why there is a lack of equal professional development support from top management.

Furthermore, the data presented in Section 5.3.3 show that top management plays a crucial role in creating a positive and healthy environment that supports justice and equality. Several leaders reported that some staff members complained about the lack of equal opportunities for all to benefit financially. It is about the injustice in creating equal opportunities to encourage staff members to support their own professional development and to become better employees. Some participants felt that there is no need for them to apply more effort or to work harder on supporting their own professional development because they know that it is not going to change anything, and they are not going to gain any financial or career benefits.

As seen in Sections 5.2.2, 5.2.3 and 5.3.3, many participants echoed that leaders and top management are responsible for providing a positive and fair working environment that supports their professional development, and it is their duty to guide and encourage them to become better employees. As suggested by some leaders in the thesis, I think that it is crucial to maintain a fair working environment where efforts are appreciated, and opportunities are equally distributed. At the same time, top management should empower leaders and their staff members by ensuring their

voices are being heard. In doing so, they will gain the confidence to implement new changes and reforms.

Based on my experience and analysis of the findings obtained from the three datasets, top management holds the position of power in making all decisions when meeting the demands and suggestions proposed by participants of this thesis regarding the provision of professional development. In Section 5.3.3, some participants proposed that top management should impose compulsory professional development programs, because they believe that some employees are not interested in contributing because the currently offered programs are not mandatory, and they feel that attending courses will not benefit their career and financial income.

This shows that many participants believe that top management controls everything, including professional development opportunities and experiences. This is true – top management should make more of an effort to involve all leaders and their staff members in the decision-making process in terms of determining their professional development needs. In my opinion, the 'bottom-up' professional development system is not only crucial to the development of staff members or leaders, but is necessary for the advancement of the whole organisation (Mann, 2005).

6.5 Professional development models and approaches

The data presented in Sections 5.1 and 5.2.4 show that most participants prefer and mainly use the internet when they were asked about what they do to support their professional growth and development; they believe that it is an essential part of their professional development. This resonates with the findings of the study undertaken by Alhabahba and Mahfoodh (2016) who found that members of TESOL Arabia use

the internet to support their professional development, believing it is an important part of their professional growth and development.

However, it is worth noting that social media appeared to be the least preferred approach for supporting professional development among most of the participants. Evidence from the three datasets indicated low trust and a common disbelief among most participants that social media would be a reliable source for useful information, although it could possibly help them to support their professional development. Interestingly, as presented in Section 3.8, there are 25 million active social media users in Saudi Arabia, keeping in mind that the total population is 33.85 million, but most of the participants in this study use social media for entertaining purposes. This contradicts with the findings of the study undertaken in Saudi Arabia by Alsobayel (2016) who reported that most healthcare professionals agree that social media networks are somewhat very, or extremely useful and effective for their professional development.

Nevertheless, throughout the findings from the three datasets, I noticed that some staff members used social media for professional development more frequently than their leaders, with most of them preferring to use Twitter. However, leaders preferred to use WhatsApp because it is easier to use and access. This matches the findings of the studies undertaken by Donelan (2016) and Alsobayel (2016) who found that most of the participants preferred to use Twitter, followed by YouTube, Facebook, Snapchat, and finally, LinkedIn. It seems that the utilisation of social media is boosted as interest is increased. It can even be used to address professional development needs through communicating with other professionals in the field and by following pioneer accounts that share new knowledge about their fields and majors. In fact, social media could also be used to expand professional

networking, bridge the gap between different global contexts, help address issues related to various disciplines and majors, and to support professional development.

Throughout the findings from the three datasets, it was clear that supporters of social media enjoy sharing ideas through the interaction of responsive social media platforms, such as Twitter, Telegram and WhatsApp because of their easy access for new information and the ability to observe new and different views. Some participants highlighted that it is simple to share useful links and videos on social media, which could help in sharing and observing different experiences and gaining new knowledge. This resonates with the findings of studies undertaken by Alsobayal (2016), Forte, et al. (2012), Weisgerber and Butler (2011), Carpenter (2015) and Donelan (2016). This could possibly mean that social media networks could be utilised to support professional development and professional networking because they are cost effective and may help to address local contextual needs and issues; this is feasible now, particularly after witnessing the situation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, based on my analysis of the findings, using the internet and collaboration seem to be central to almost all the participants in terms of supporting their professional development. They believe that collaboration and sharing experiences with other colleagues could help in supporting their professional knowledge and skills, and it was the second most preferred approach or model of professional development. However, it is very important to mention that this type of professional learning and development is occurring informally among some staff members and leaders without supervision or any form of guided support from top management. This might suggest that the IPA should allow extra time and provide more space for leaders and their staff members to interact with each other to support

collaboration and knowledge transfer to maintain their professional growth and development.

Moreover, the data presented in Section 5.1 show that *Working within a community of practice* was the third most preferred approach or model of supporting professional development after *Using the internet* and *Collaboration*. It seems that most participants in this study preferred professional development approaches or models that involve interactions with other professionals or colleagues in their fields and majors. It could be said that creating an active community of practice could help its members to develop professionally, as well as to create new opportunities for development, change or reform. Learning within a community of practice can be mind opening (Kennedy, 2005) because it could widen the gaze of professionals by discussing and reflecting on ideas and experiences. However, as indicated by Kennedy (2005), in this model, the depth of connections between professionals is a key factor for creating further opportunities for learning and development. This probably suggest that the roles of leaders and leaderships are crucial to creating an environment that supports collaboration and sharing experiences.

Furthermore, appointing experienced staff members to work with less experienced staff members on professional development activities seems to be a somewhat effective approach, as suggested by many participants in this study. As explained in Sections 5.1 and 5.2.3, many participants believe that 'knowledge transfer' is effective and useful, especially for newly hired staff members. They also thought that 'knowledge transfer' could help to minimise mistakes and to speed up the process of learning and development. It is very important to mention that this approach of professional development has never been utilised in the context of this study, either formally or informally. This probably suggests that there is a need to

reconsider the entire professional development system at the IPA, resulting in a system where staff members and their leaders can play an active role in determining and addressing their professional development needs through collaborative endeavours.

Observing lectures presented by experienced staff members was one of the preferred approaches of supporting professional development by some participants in this study. As identified in Section 5.3.1, *observation* could be a powerful tool or approach for supporting professional development. Some participants in this study echoed that observation has helped to encourage some staff members to take the first step in teaching actual classes, as confirmed by Abdullah, “Observation of training programs helped them to break the wall of fear.”

It seems that observing classes presented by more experienced staff members could help newly appointed staff members to take the first step in presenting their first lecture and training program. This probably suggests that giving the chance for newly hired staff members to observe and watch lectures and training programs presented by more experienced staff could help them to learn quicker, as well as help them to develop and avoid making the same mistakes. This means that observation could be utilised as part of an induction program or in-service professional development program that could assist in addressing individual, local and contextual needs and issues.

Finally, throughout the findings from the three datasets we were able to identify that *Collaboration* was one of the most preferred approaches or models for supporting professional development after *Using the internet*. This result is seen in Sections 5.1, 5.2.3, 5.2.4 and 5.3 where many participants highlighted the

importance of collaboration, and the need for supporting knowledge transfer and sharing experiences to help them develop professionally to become better employees. This probably suggests that it could be helpful, useful and effective when engaging staff members and new leaders, that is, for newly appointed staff members to meet with their experienced counterparts, to support their professional development, and to prepare new leaders for their new missions.

6.6 Summary

This chapter has discussed the findings that have emerged from three datasets in Chapter 5 that have been connected to the existing body of literature and theoretical framework of this study. Perceptions, perspectives, ideas, common thoughts and beliefs about professional development and the roles of leaders and management in supporting professional development among their staff members or employees have been presented and connected to my personal experiences and the previous body of literature to draw a picture of the participants' experiences of professional development.

The findings of this study have shown that there is a match between perceptions of staff members and leaders regarding the provision of professional development. Throughout the three datasets, it is clear to note that most participants believe that the currently offered professional development opportunities do not meet their needs. Additionally, most participants identify using the internet and collaboration as central to their personal professional growth, learning and development. One key finding of this thesis is the proposal to create an online platform to share ideas and professional development opportunities and experiences to support collaboration. At the same time, it is important to highlight that the findings

revealed disbelief and low trust in social media as a tool that could be utilised to support professional development.

Most participants reported that they only want to be listened to in terms of determining their professional development needs. The data has revealed that the centralised and top-down approach of the current professional development system is negatively impacting their professional development experiences. Based on the findings of this study, the leaders' roles should be concerned with involving their staff members and allowing them to play a more active role in improving work practices and determining their own professional development needs. This probably suggests that there is a need to reconsider the leaders' roles at the IPA – perhaps prepare leaders to be a source of inspiration, support and encouragement for development and reform, not just processors of daily work and enforcers of rules and regulations.

The negative impact of a heavy workload on professional development is another major issue which not only influences the professional development experiences of staff members and leaders, but is also one of the main reasons for the lack of collaboration, weak participation in conferences and writing for academic journals. The data revealed that it is extremely important to allocate extra time and to give more space for staff members and leaders to consider their professional development needs; it is equally important to instruct them on how to do so. That is, just reducing the workload will not work. It is crucial to inform them that this extra time is given to help support their professional development and to become better employees.

Additionally, my findings have helped in contributing to the body of knowledge in providing empirical data on the importance of activating the roles of leaders and

management in supporting professional development. One of the key findings of this study is that leaders should be encouraged to ensure that their staff members are able to share their thoughts, concerns and professional development needs by creating a positive work environment that encourages transparency, knowledge transfer and sharing of ideas. This suggests that top management and decision-makers in the context of this study should develop a new participatory system of professional development that involves all leaders and their staff members in the decision-making process regarding determining their professional development needs. This also mean that top management should allow more autonomy to leaders and their staff members by involving them in the decision-making process so they are able to decide their professional development needs.

In addition, it is clear to note that a good position rotation process could help in creating a work environment that encourages staff members to become better employees and to push them to manage their own professional development. Therefore, it is crucial to maintain a working environment where efforts are appreciated, and opportunities are equally distributed. At the same time, the data revealed that top management should empower leaders and their staff members by ensuring their voices are being heard with regard to making changes that could help in implementing initiatives and reforms.

Finally, the data showed that top management has the upper hand in making decisions, as well as the authority to meet the demands and suggestions proposed by participants of this study regarding the provision of professional development. To sum up, from all the discussed findings in this chapter, it appears that a 'bottom-up' professional development system is crucial to the development of leaders and their staff members, and the advancement of the whole organisation (Mann, 2005).

CHAPTER 7 – CONCLUSION

In this chapter, a summary of key findings and a brief discussion of their implications are presented, followed by a discussion on the limitations of the study. Finally, some recommendations and suggestions for further research, future practice and policy are discussed.

7.1 Research implications

This study explores IPA staff members' and leaders' professional development experiences, thoughts, concerns and needs in their own context and setting. It is worth mentioning that this is the first study that has attempted to explore and understand professional development at the only national professional development training provider in Saudi Arabia. To my knowledge, no studies have taken the steps to conduct a study within the IPA to investigate professional development, therefore, this is the first occasion for IPA staff members and leaders to become involved in being interviewed regarding their own professional development experiences and needs. This study gains its importance from the exploration and investigation of professional development at the primary professional development provider in the country. This study is also believed to be the first of its kind that has attempted to clarify an in-house training and professional development system, which has helped to provide new insight into how to improve and support professional development within similar contexts and settings.

The findings of this study have contributed to the body of knowledge by providing empirical data regarding professional development, and the roles of top management and leaders or managers in supporting professional development

among their staff members or employees. This study suggests that researchers in the field of professional development need to pay more attention towards the role of the culture of professionalism and local political system to help in identifying gaps and implementing reforms and changes (Evan, 2008). This possibly means that further research is required to understand the culture of professionalism at the IPA and in Saudi Arabia.

I believe that more research is also needed to understand the political system and professionalism culture within the Gulf Region. Similar institutes, such as the IPA in Oman and Bahrain, may find this study useful in identifying additional insight and benchmarks for further research.

One key finding of this study is that most participants in both groups (staff members and leaders) insisted on the necessity to be involved in making decisions regarding their professional development needs. This probably suggests that top management should take steps to empower leaders and their staff members to help in making decisions regarding their own professional development, or at least to help HRD management to design a suitable professional development framework or practice that is based on the recipients' actual needs and demands. At the same time, leaders' and their staff members' professional development should be monitored and closely observed to evaluate the impact of the offered professional development programs and opportunities (Bubby & Early, 2009). Therefore, it may be beneficial to hold monthly or quarterly meetings, led and chaired by leaders with their staff members in attendance to discuss professional development topics. After each session, leaders will share the meeting minutes with HRD management and jointly decide how to proceed with supporting staff members' professional development.

In addition, this study has revealed that using the internet and collaboration are central to the participants' professional growth, learning and development. Therefore, it might be useful to establish an online discussion platform(s) to share ideas, professional development opportunities and experiences to support collaboration, because "learning and development should be shared, acknowledged and celebrated for improvement to be sustained" (Bubb & Earley, 2009, p. 25). Therefore, encouraging online collaboration and discussion may help in sustaining an active professional development approach within the IPA. This should be combined with support from top management and HRD management, including leaders and their staff members allowed more time and space to consider their professional development. In this study, both groups of participants are under pressure in their busy work environment, therefore, reducing the workload will free up time to concentrate on their professional development. Time is precious and a heavy workload negatively impacts on leaders' and their staff members' professional development experiences.

This study has also revealed that IPA top management should encourage and help leaders create a positive environment to encourage their staff members to share thoughts, concerns and ideas in a supportive atmosphere that would promote transparency, knowledge transfer and sharing of ideas. This highlights the importance of creating a new participatory model of professional development that would allow leaders and their staff members to express and discuss their needs and concerns. It is about creating a professional development system that starts from the bottom and makes its way to the top. Some participants in this study suggested the minimum requirement to seek information about professional development experiences and needs is to email a survey or questionnaire for completion.

Unfortunately, at the IPA, it has always been about what we can do for staff members to improve their skills so they become better employees, whereas it should be about involving them to help create better professional development opportunities and experiences.

In addition, this study has revealed that an effective position rotation process could help in creating a positive and supportive work environment that encourages staff members to take care of their own professional development. To my knowledge, this issue has never been investigated at the context of this study. However, it is crucial that all parties involved feel they are working in a fair and inclusive environment where efforts are appreciated, and opportunities are equally distributed. At the same time, it is important to ensure that all employees' voices are being heard, they can make a change, and they can help to implement proposed ideas and suggest reforms. Therefore, a bottom-up professional development system would help in creating a positive, fair work environment; it is also essential for the advancement of the IPA.

This study has revealed that there is a need to reconsider leaders' roles to ensure they are well prepared to become responsible for their staff members' professional development needs, and for them to think beyond their administrative duties. Furthermore, this study is the first of its kind that has reflected on this particular issue at the IPA – and possibly in Saudi Arabia. Throughout the different stages of this study, observations from many leaders have raised the need to prepare them for their new positions. Most leaders echoed that it is crucial to prepare new leaders for their new missions and tasks. This might suggest that IPA top management or HRD management should implement a preparatory program for new

leaders, managers and department heads prior to them embarking on their new responsibilities and duties.

Finally, throughout all chapters of this study, it is obvious that IPA top management and its committee need to make decisions that would allow leaders and their staff members to become involved in the decision-making process regarding their work practice and professional development needs. Top management and HRD management should offer more autonomy to leaders and their staff members that will encourage a self-driven form of professional development through using the internet and social media. Providing training and workshops to enlighten leaders and their staff members about strategies and opportunities could help them to enrich their knowledge and sharpen their skills. The suggestion is to reduce the heavy reliance on committees and replace it with regular meetings within each department and sector where relevant issues and possible improvements to practice and professional development can be discussed.

This study suggests that researchers in the field of professional development need to understand the role of management or HRD practices, as well as how leaders fit within the system of professional development to gain a wider vision for exploration. It is important to understand the interrelated factors between employees and their leaders when incorporating management practices.

At the same time, the overall working environment plays an essential role in any research study associated with professional development. In this study, it has been identified that it is crucial to provide a positive working environment that encourages employees to share their experiences, thoughts, concerns and ideas in a

supportive atmosphere that promotes transparency, collaboration and knowledge transfer.

Additionally, I believe that further research is essential to study the impact of the position rotation process on the professional development of employees. In this study, it was vital that all involved parties felt they were working in a fair and inclusive environment where their efforts were appreciated, and opportunities were equally distributed.

7.2 Limitations of the study

Like other studies and research projects, this study has several limitations. In this section, those limitations are discussed to provide readers with a complete and full understanding of the different constraints and challenges that have been encountered throughout the different stages of conducting this study.

Firstly, this study mainly relied on qualitative research approaches and data collection methods. The utilised data collection methods in this study have helped in gathering in-depth data, but they cannot be generalised. Possibly, the usage of a mixed method approach would have helped to gather additional data and gain more general views regarding provision for professional development. However, I am not suggesting that the adopted research paradigm and utilised methodology are not suitable, but rather highlighting that fact that it may have been more helpful to employ a mixed method approach to assist in obtaining a wider vision and generalisable data about the nature of professional development at the IPA. Additionally, using an open-ended survey or questionnaire was the best choice made to generate more views and opinions. To address this limitation in this study, as indicated earlier in Chapters

4 and 5, a space was left under each survey item to allow participants to express their views and concerns openly and honestly.

In addition, during the data collection process, female participants did not partake in the research. In Saudi Arabia, men and women are segregated in most settings, apart from hospitals. The IPA has three female branches in Saudi Arabia – Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam cities. Due to religious and cultural barriers, female participants were not able to be interviewed in this study. However, as aforementioned, the survey was emailed to all IPA branches, including female branches, which allowed females to participate. Thus, the semi-structured interviews and focus group interview were conducted with male participants only, which limited the scope of this research project due to the inability of interviewing female participants. I believe that IPA female branches play an important role in supporting professional development within many segregated female settings in the country, therefore, it is important to shed some light on their views and concerns.

Finally, time constraints and the need to travel to Saudi Arabia, and travel to the main branch in the capital city and other branches created further challenges. Throughout the journey of conducting this research project, I encountered many personal and practical challenges, one of which was being forced to follow a set of rules and fixed timelines to complete this study. Pressure from both the university and my sponsor required me to focus more on getting things done on time. At the same time, I had to meet the different demands of participants in terms of allocating their preferred times and locations for conducting the interviews. It was not a simple process to schedule interviews based on the convenience of the participants. Throughout the journey of conducting this study, many practical issues have been

endured, but at the same time, these obstacles have caused me to seriously think about research.

7.3 Recommendations for further research

In this study, time constraints and deadline pressures limited the major requirement for the completion of my doctorate degree. Therefore, a longitudinal study to explore and understand IPA staff members' professional development journeys may be useful; this can start from the first day of work until the attainment of their master's degrees. The suggestion is to further explore staff members' professional development through self-reflection reports to garner more in-depth data about their professional development experiences and needs.

Furthermore, it can be practical to include government trainees and students in future studies to explore the impact of professional development programs on learners' performances and outcomes. It is known that the main purpose of the imposed professional development training programs by IPA top management is to improve the work performance of staff members so that they eventually become effective professional trainers. This could be reflected on learners' and trainees' perspectives about what they consider to be important in terms of improving IPA staff members' performance. Thus, future studies are encouraged to investigate IPA trainees' perspectives and attitudes regarding improving the professional development of staff members. Further studies could consider measuring the impact of the professional development system on work practice and learners' results and outcomes.

Moreover, the total number of female staff members in all IPA female branches is 143, of which 129 work in the female branch in the capital city of Riyadh

10 female staff members are located in the city of Dammam, Eastern Province, and the remaining four female staff members work in the city of Jeddah, Makkah province. As aforementioned, due to cultural and religious barriers, it was impossible to interview female participants in this study. Therefore, further research is necessary to conduct a similar study with female participants, or a more inclusive study of both female and male participants.

Further research is also essential to explore perceptions and perspectives regarding self-directed or self-driven forms of professional development, such as an online discussion board or platform to chat about professional development opportunities and experiences. This would be less stressful than face-to-face interviews, allowing participants to share their views, thoughts, ideas and concerns in a safe environment. Researchers will have the opportunity to observe the participants' interactions that can result in understanding their professional development needs in greater detail. In combination with studying the impact of social media networks, discussions regarding the least effective and most effective and preferred social applications in terms of supporting professional development will produce positive results.

The exploration and understanding of the impact of the position rotation process on staff members' professional development initiatives also needs to be researched. Providing opportunities to lead or to make an impact could encourage staff members to take care of their own professional development and to improve their work practices. Therefore, clarification is needed on the position rotation process at the IPA to enable the exploration of its impact on staff members' willingness to support their own professional growth and development.

Finally, quantitative approaches in future studies and research to obtain viewpoints that could be generalised to other regional and local contexts and settings may be useful. However, based on reviewing the relevant body of literature, there are few empirical qualitative studies or quantitative studies that have explored top management practices that impact on leaders and their staff members in terms of supporting professional development. Therefore, a mixed method approach in future research and studies to combine both qualitative and quantitative tools to garner more in-depth data about professional development at the IPA and in the context of Saudi Arabia can be employed.

APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY INSTRUCTIONS AND QUESTIONS

Dear IPA Colleagues,

I hope that you and your loved ones are fine,

Attached in this email is a link of a survey designed by one of our colleagues who is pursuing a doctorate degree in the UK. We hope that you could find a time to take part and participate. The survey is fairly short and it has a total of 14 questions about the effectiveness of some professional development models and approaches based on your personal experiences and views.

I have left a space under each survey item to comment and elaborate on your selections.

This survey is part of a study that seeks to explore your opinions in the offered professional development programs by the IPA, and your thoughts about professional development models and approaches.

Thank you for your participation and contribution in the success of this research project. If you have any questions about the survey, or if you want to participate in interviews, please contact me:

Email: khalid.msn@msn.com

Phone: 0555571257

Q1: I consent that I am willing to participate and answer the survey questions.

Yes

No

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q2: Have you worked as a manager/leader, head department or a program director?

Yes

No

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q3: Training programs designed and offered by the IPA at my work place to support my professional knowledge and development are...

Extremely Effective

Very Effective

Somewhat Effective

Not Effective

Briefly explain why:

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q4: Training programs designed and offered abroad to support my professional knowledge and development are...

Extremely Effective
Very Effective
Somewhat Effective
Not Effective
Briefly explain why:

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q5: Collaborating and working with other colleagues to support my professional knowledge and development is...

Extremely Effective
Very Effective
Somewhat Effective
Not Effective
Briefly explain why:

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q6: The management appoint experienced staff members to work with other less experienced staff members on professional development activities. In my opinion, this is...

Extremely Effective
Very Effective
Somewhat Effective
Not Effective
Briefly explain why:

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q7: Conducting action research to create new opportunities to support my professional knowledge and development is...Action Research: is "a type of research whose aim is to address specific problems found in a particular area of activity".

Extremely Effective
Very Effective
Somewhat Effective
Not Effective
Briefly explain why:

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q8: Writing for academic journals to support my professional knowledge and development is...

Extremely Effective
Very Effective
Somewhat Effective
Not Effective
Briefly explain why:

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q9: Participating in conferences to support my professional knowledge and development is...

Extremely Effective
Very Effective
Somewhat Effective
Not Effective
Briefly explain why:

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q10: Using the internet to support my professional knowledge and development is...

Extremely Effective
Very Effective
Somewhat Effective
Not Effective
Briefly explain why:

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q11: Using social media to support my professional knowledge and development is...

Extremely Effective
Very Effective
Somewhat Effective
Not Effective
Briefly explain why:

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q12: Teaching me by managers about new or other available professional development opportunities is...

Extremely Effective
Very Effective
Somewhat Effective
Not Effective
Briefly explain why:

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q13: Working on professional development activities within a community of practice where a group of professionals who share the same profession or major discuss issues related to their practice and professional development is...

Extremely Effective
Very Effective
Somewhat Effective
Not Effective
Briefly explain why:

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

Q14: How would you rate your satisfaction with the professional development opportunities offered to IPA staff members?

Extremely Effective
Very Effective
Somewhat Effective
Not Effective
Briefly explain why:

Powered by  SurveyMonkey

APPENDIX 2 – STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How important is professional development to you?
2. What do you do to support your professional growth and development?
3. What sources do you use to find out about other professional development opportunities in your field?
4. Have colleagues shared with you what they have learned from their professional development experiences?
5. How do you describe your leader's role in supporting your professional development?
6. What does your manager/leader do to support your professional development?
7. What do you think the IPA management should do to support your professional development?
8. Do you use the internet and social media for professional development?
9. What aspects of social media do you find the most beneficial in terms of supporting professional development?
10. Could you please indicate ways you used the internet or social media for professional development?
11. In what ways, if any, did your use of the internet or social media affect how or what you taught?
12. To what extent do the current and previous professional development opportunities offered to you by the IPA management meet your needs?
13. What recommendations can you give to support and improve the professional development of IPA staff members?

APPENDIX 3 – LEADER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How important is professional development to you?
2. What do you do to support your professional growth and development?
3. What sources do you use to find out about professional development opportunities?
4. How do you describe your role in supporting your staff members' professional development?
5. What do you do to support your staff members' professional development?
6. Have colleagues or other leaders shared with you what they have learned from their professional development experiences?
7. What do you think the IPA management should do to support professional development?
8. Do you use the internet and social media for professional development?
9. What aspects of social media do you find the most beneficial in terms of supporting professional development?
10. Could you please indicate ways you used the internet or social media for professional development, or to support your staff members' professional development?
11. To what extent do the current and previous professional development opportunities offered to you by the IPA management meet your needs?
12. What recommendations can you give to support and improve the professional development of IPA staff members?

APPENDIX 4 – FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION PLAN

- ❖ Discussing the survey questions
- ❖ Professional development
- ❖ Pre-service and in-service training
- ❖ Provision for professional development
- ❖ Professional development needs
- ❖ Professional development models and approaches
- ❖ Leaders' roles in supporting professional development
- ❖ Top management's role in supporting professional development
- ❖ Suggestions, concerns and final thoughts about professional development at the IPA

APPENDIX 5 – CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

St Luke's Campus
Heavitree Road
Exeter UK EX1 2LU

<http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/>

CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project: Exploring Professional Development at the Institute of Public Administration
in Saudi Arabia

Researcher(s) name: Khalid Althigafi

Supervisor(s): 1- PROFESSOR VIVIENNE BAUMFIELD
2- Dr Susan Riley

This project has been approved for the period

From: 21/12/2018

To: 18/09/2019

Ethics Committee approval reference:

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Justin Dillon'.

Date: 27/11/2018

(Professor Justin Dillon, Professor of Science and Environmental Education, Ethics Officer)

APPENDIX 6 – IPA APPROVAL LETTER

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم



المملكة العربية السعودية
معهد الإدارة العامة
مركز البحوث والدراسات

التاريخ: ١٤٤٠/٣/٢٤ هـ

(مذكرة داخلية)

من : مدير عام مركز البحوث والدراسات .
إلى : سعادة الأستاذ/ خالد بن عطية الله الثقفي .
بشان : تطبيق بحث على المعهد .

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته،،،

إشارة إلى طلبكم تطبيق بحث بعنوان " Exploring Professional Development at the Institute of Public Administration in Saudi Arabia " على أعضاء هيئة التدريب والقيادات الإدارية بمعهد الإدارة العامة، نفيدكم بموافقة سعادة نائب المدير العام للبحوث والاستشارات على تطبيق البحث المذكور أعلاه على الفئة المستهدفة، علماً أن مركز البحوث والدراسات ليس معنياً بجمع البيانات الخاصة بهذا البحث.

وتقبلوا وافر التحية والتقدير، ،،

مدير عام مركز البحوث والدراسات

د. وسيم بن سلمان الناصر

حسوة لمساعدة مدير إدارة الدعم المنهجي والإحصائي

APPENDIX 7 – PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM

CONSENT FORM

Research Title: *Exploring Professional Development at the Institute of Public Administration in Saudi Arabia*

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.
I understand that:

- there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may withdraw at any stage;
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me;
- any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations;
- all information I give will be treated as confidential;
- The researcher will make every effort to preserve my anonymity.

.....
(Signature of participant)

.....
(Date)

.....
(Printed name of participant)

.....
(Email address of participant if they have requested to view a copy of the interview transcript.)

.....
(Signature of researcher)

.....
(Printed name of researcher)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s).

APPENDIX 8 – RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET

Research Title: Exploring Professional Development at the Institute of Public Administration in Saudi Arabia

My name is Khalid Althigafi. This research is being undertaken as part of my examination for the award of a professional doctorate degree at the University of Exeter funded by my employer, the Institute of Public Administration in Saudi Arabia.

The research aims to explore and examine the perceptions and experiences of the Institute of Public Administration Faculty Staff Members and Leaders in Saudi Arabia toward professional development, and professional development models. At the same time, the study will attempt to explore leaders' perceptions toward their roles in supporting professional development among their staff members.

As a participant you will be interviewed about professional development, professional development models, the current policies of professional development, and professionalism culture in your own context. Also, you will be asked about your personal experiences of professional development. If you are a leader or have worked as a leader/manager or director, you will be asked more questions about your role as a leader in supporting professional development among your staff members. Additionally, you will be asked if you want to take part in focus-group interview afterwards. The interview will be face to face and is expected to last between 30 to 45 minutes. The interview will be audio recorded. You have the right to choose a location for the interview, or the researcher will invite you to a nearby location.

After the interview, I will analyse the data collected and transcribe it to be used in the research project. You can ask for a copy of your interview transcript if you want. At the same time, a summary of key findings will be prepared for you if you want once the research is concluded. Both electronic and paper data will be stored in a private locker with a locking code, and only accessed by the researcher.

The research has been approved by the ethical committee of the University of Exeter and if you require further information, please contact:

First supervisor: Profession Vivienne Baumfield: Email: v.baumfield@exeter.ac.uk

Second supervisor: Dr Susan Riley: Email: S.M.Riley@exeter.ac.uk

APPENDIX 9 – EXAMPLE TRANSCRIPT AND CODING

Participant-1: Staff Member-1

Q-1 How important is professional development to you?

Very important, no matter what qualifications you have, you still need professional development. It is about skills not knowledge that you acquire from your studies. It is to be up to date. When it comes to the reality of your context and setting, it is different. What we learn is general, but what we face in our daily work needs professional development, and there are some things where we need skills more than knowledge, and that is why we need professional development programs that are orientated or related to very specific set of skills to meet the changing demands of our jobs.

Q-2 What do you do to support your professional growth and development?

Because I love reading, when I come across a new thing, I try to learn about it. That is why I use the internet and electronic books. I mainly rely on online sources. There are many websites that can help you in many ways.

Q-3 What sources do you use to find out about other professional development opportunities in your field?

I think EDX (online courses). I also use my cellphone. Some universities provide free online courses in many subjects.

Q-4 Have colleagues shared with you what they have learned from their professional development experiences?

To be honest, no.

Q-5 How do you describe your leader's role in supporting your professional development?

I think leaders should support their staff members to find out about professional development opportunities in their fields, and they should look for and consider their staff members' professional development needs and to find out their weaknesses. The leader has a very important role in encouraging his employees to develop professionally. The leader plays a very important role in encouraging his employees to take courses in certain fields to improve practice. Leaders could also suggest for their staff members or employees to take courses in particular fields to improve practice. The leader is responsible of monitoring his staff members' performance to find out about what they need to improve them. I think the leader should be our voice to the higher administration to convey our professional development needs. The leader might play a significant role in meeting the professional development demands and needs of staff members.

Q-6 *What does your manager/leader do to support your professional development?*

Nothing.

Q-7 *What do you think the IPA management should do to support your professional development?*

First, I think the management should have an interactive relationship with its employees. For example, I want them to listen to me. I might have ideas to improve practice in my field because I am the first one who deal with daily classes and understand students' needs. The management might manage daily work, but I am the one who is in the field and my voice is very important because I could provide the management with important and relevant details of my major and my field work in the classroom.

Q-8 *Do you use the internet and social media for professional development?*

Yes, I use the internet and social media in different ways.

Q-9 *What aspects of social media do you find the most beneficial in terms of supporting professional development?*

On social media, I follow people who are majoring in English such as on Twitter, and I see what they have to say about new trends in the field. There are some accounts I follow on social media and they provide me with the essence of their experiences. For example, some talk about research in the field and new research methods.

Q-10 *Could you please indicate ways you used the internet or social media for professional development?*

I think Twitter is the number one source for me. It keeps me updated, and you can find new information that never came across your mind, and you could learn new knowledge in your field. The reason I like Twitter is because of its easy access to gain new knowledge. It provides an easily accessible platform. Hashtags and new trends could be accessible anytime and anywhere. It provides the chance to see things from different global perspectives that are related to our daily practices and specific majors. You get the chance to see what other people and practitioners say in your field. It also gives the chance to see what individuals have to say or want to say about the field away from the organizations' agendas.

I also use Telegram because it is more oriented and centered towards my practice. There are groups which are oriented or specifically established for specific majors and fields of expertise. One of its major advantages is the interaction is very quick, you might ask a question and you will find many people interested in the same topic. You could also find groups for research and education. You could also easily share new links with group members which will lead to a very productive discussion. You could also ask group members about their experiences.

Q-11 *In what ways, if any, did your use of the internet or social media affect how or what you taught?*

I do not remember.

Q-12 *To what extent do the current and previous professional development opportunities offered to you by the IPA management meet your needs?*

The training programs and courses used to meet every major and field, and there used to be a flexibility to choose any program you want. Now, things have changed, and many programs do not meet our professional development needs. There are very few training programs for English language staff members. The new training programs are within the main IPA agendas and activities and they are not relevant to my field and major of language learning and teaching.

I would rate my satisfaction as 6 out of 10 of the currently provided professional development programs and opportunities. The missing 4% could be met and satisfied by involving me in choosing the right training program or to be contacted by the HRD management about my training and professional development needs.

Q-13 *What recommendations can you give to support and improve the professional development of IPA staff members?*

I see that it is important to involve staff members in the planning of our professional development programs. Sharing experiences and knowledge transfer are also equally important. Staff members need to share what they have learned from their training programs and professional development experiences. I suggest for a platform for all staff members to share their experiences and knowledge. I suggest for a more customized professional development programs directed to meet staff members' specific professional development needs. The programs could be customized to meet the goals of the organizations and its staff members. I think the best way to transfer knowledge and experiences is to live them, and possibly making me work for other English language centres in the country to learn from their experiences. There is no better experience than making me live that experience and learn everything from it. It is the best way to see and live all the pros and cons. It is about learning by practice.

Categories	Ideas/Codes
Perceptions of the importance of professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving skills • To be up to date ✓ Context specific professional development ✓ Importance of improving skills more than knowledge ✓ Improving specific set of skills ✓ - Specific and up-to-date professional development programs

Categories	Ideas/Codes
Perceptions of approaches/ ways to support professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading • Using the internet • Contact my leader/manager
Perceptions of sources to support professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online courses • Using cell phones which include using the internet and social media • Using google • Using public and digital libraries
Perceptions of collaboration to support professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of collaboration <p>The need for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing experiences • Knowledge transfer • A platform to share professional development experiences • Allocate more time to share experiences
Staff members' perceptions of their leaders role in supporting professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping staff members to find out about professional development opportunities • Identifying their staff members professional development needs and weakness • Encouraging staff members to develop professionally. • Suggesting relevant professional development programs and courses • Mentoring staff members' performance. • Leaders' roles as a link with the higher administration to convey staff members' professional development needs • Creating a positive environment to support professional development • Absence of leaders' roles
Staff members' perceptions of the IPA management role in supporting professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To listen to staff members • The importance of staff members' voice • To provide more opportunities for professional development

Categories	Ideas/Codes
Perceptions of using social media to support professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Following social media accounts to learn from their experiences • Rational for using Twitter for professional development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ To be up to date ✓ Easy to find new information ✓ Learning new knowledge ✓ Open and easily acceptable platform anytime and anywhere ✓ Open space for discussion and to learn from other people • Rational for using Telegram for professional development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ More specific towards practice ✓ Quick interaction ✓ Easy to share and discuss knowledge and experiences
Perceptions of the current professional development programs and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrelevant professional development programs • Few professional development programs for English, accounting, computer science and statistics staff members • Involving staff members to decide upon opportunities for professional development programs and professional development needs
Perceptions of staff members regarding their professional development needs and experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involving staff members to plan and decide upon opportunities for their professional development needs • Importance of staff members' voices • Practical training or professional development experiences • Knowledge transfer • Learning by practice

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